



# Golf Strategy - Golfer Season Ticket Holder (including FLEXI) Results

August 2021

# Golfer Season Ticket Holder Survey Results

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## 1. Introduction

1.1. The survey was one of five surveys targeting different aspects of the golf strategy. This particular survey was aimed at golfers who are season ticket holders (including FLEXI). The survey was available .....online via the Council's public website from the ..... July 2021. The survey remained open for ..... weeks closing on the morning of the 23 August 2021. A link to the survey was disseminated through the Council's social media channels, by email to South Ayrshire community groups????? and to SA1000 panel members.

1.2. This survey was in two parts. The first part consisted of 22 golf orientated questions with some questions having several sub-questions. .

- Questions 1 to 7 were general questions on respondent's thoughts on the state of golf in South Ayrshire.
- Questions 8 to 15 were about specific golf courses in South Ayrshire.
- Questions 16 to 22 were about future considerations for golf in South Ayrshire.

The second part was about the respondent.

- Questions 23 to 26 captured four demographics of the respondent: Local authority residence, gender, age group and considered disabled or not.
- Questions 27 to 31 asked about the respondent's golf playing history.

## 2. Key Points

- There were some quite dominant characteristics of those who responded to this survey that do not align with the overall demographic of all South Ayrshire's population.
- Based on responses received for this survey Golf South Ayrshire's performance appears to be moderately successful with no absolute areas of poor performance and no outstanding areas of performance. All areas could be improved upon.
- The most important areas for improvement have been identified in each of the 8 Golf South Ayrshire golf courses.
- Increase the number of members was the most chosen option (47%) to increase income to retain and maintain all 8 golf courses.
- More than 1 in 3 respondents (36%) feel the council should continue to operate 8 courses with no changes even though they run at a loss. Almost 3 out of 10 (28%) want the council to continue to operate 8 courses but increase fees to cover costs while 1 in 5 respondents (20%) would prefer to reduce the number of courses (i.e. closures).
- The three most important strategic challenges identified by respondents are:
- The three most important strategic opportunities identified by respondents are:
- The overwhelming majority (76%) of respondents are in favour of developing a golf academy/driving range.

### 3. Summary

3.1. There were 910 people who responded to this survey. Not all of the 910 responded to each question. Golf questions were a mixture of questions types including giving a rating, choosing a response from several options, and open ended that respondents could comment on. Respondents were also asked nine demographic type questions about themselves.

#### 3.2. **The dominant characteristics of the 910 respondents:**

- 3 out of 4 (74.6%) live in South Ayrshire
- 9 out of 10 (88.5%) are male
- 1 in 3 (34.1%) are aged 60 to 69 years with 1 in 2 (50.7%) aged 60+
- 1 in 25 (4.4%) consider themselves to have a disability
- 3 out of 4 (76.4%) are golf club members
- 1 out of 4 (27.3%) mostly play golf at Belleisle golf course
- 1 out of 4 (24.8%) mostly play golf at Lochgreen golf course
- 3 out of 4 (75.5%) play golf very frequently i.e. more than once a week
- 1 out of 2 (49.9%) first started playing golf under the age of 20
- 1 out of 2 (48.0%) was introduced to golf by a family member
- 2 out of 5 (40.5%) were introduced to golf by a friend

3.3. **Dashboard.** A breakdown of how individual demographics answered the rating golf questions (Qs 1 to 15 and Q20) is available on request via an Excel dashboard. The dashboard can be used to provide greater insight into who or how particular demographic groups answered the rating golf questions.

3.4. **Questions 1 to 15 - Summary Table of Results:** The following table shows the survey questions and overall survey result for questions 1 to 15 where respondents had to give a rating either out of 5 or out of 10. The higher the score the better the result.

3.4.1. There are no disastrous nor outstandingly well performing scores. Scores for each question tend to generally indicate there has been moderate success regarding the issue queried but there is room for improvement.

Question Topic	Overall Result Score
Q1 Opinion on health of golf in Scotland at grassroots level	6.5 out of 10 very healthy
Q2 Opinion on health of Golf South Ayrshire courses and facilities	6.6 out of 10 very healthy
Q3 How well do you think Golf South Ayrshire is currently inspiring more people to play golf?	3.02 out of 5 very well
Q4 How well do you think Golf South Ayrshire is currently promoting golf as a game for life where participation contributes to a healthy South Ayrshire community?	2.90 out of 5 very well
Q5 How do you think Golf South Ayrshire is currently performing against ..	
Q5a providing a choice of membership categories based on access and cost.	3.33 out of 5 very well
Q5b presenting courses to a good standard, offering year-round playability.	3.32 out of 5 very well
Q5c making golf easier to access, learn and play in particular for young people and women.	2.93 out of 5 very well
Q5d promoting the courses to golfers out with South Ayrshire.	3.13 out of 5 very well
Q5e engaging and connecting with Season Ticket Holders and potential Ticket Holders.	2.66 out of 5 very well
Q6 How strongly do you agree South Ayrshire Council should be doing more to encourage golf tourism in the region?	3.85 out of 5 strongly agree

Question Topic	Overall Result Score
Q7 How appealing are the Golf South Ayrshire competitions and festivals (Ayr Golf Week, Troon Weekender, Girvan Classic) to attend and participate?	5.02 out of 10 very appealing
Q8 How important do you feel the following areas are at Darley Golf Course? A breakdown of how of respondents who mostly play at this course responded is available in the Details of this report.	
Q8a Woodland and Vegetation Management (Rabbit Control / Playability)	4.09 out of 5 very important
Q8b Improved Bunkers (Positioning & Design)	3.48 out of 5 very important
Q8c Creation of a safe network of paths for non-golfers (Health & Safety)	3.30 out of 5 very important
Q8d Creation of Winter Teeing Grounds (Year-round Playability)	3.62 out of 5 very important
Q8e Improved Access to permit use of Golf Buggies (Health & Safety)	3.18 out of 5 very important
Q9 How important do you feel the following areas are at Lockgreen golf Course? A breakdown of how of respondents who mostly play at this course responded is available in the Details of this report.	
Q9a Improved drainage on Holes 2, 3, 5, 11 (Year-round Playability)	4.29 out of 5 very important
Q9b Woodland and Vegetation Management (Rabbit Control / Playability)	4.02 out of 5 very important
Q9c Holes 15 & 16 (Redesign – Health and Safety)	2.87 out of 5 very important
Q9d Heather renovations (Playability)	3.27 out of 5 very important
Q9e Improved Bunkers (Positioning & Design)	3.37 out of 5 very important
Q9f Creation of Winter Teeing Grounds (Year-Round Playability)	3.63 out of 5 very important
Q10 How important do you feel the following areas are at Fullarton Golf Course? A breakdown of how of respondents who mostly play at this course responded is available in the Details of this report.	
Q10a Improved Drainage on Holes 8, 14, 15 (Year-round Playability)	4.00 out of 5 very important
Q10b Heather renovations (Playability)	3.25 out of 5 very important
Q10c Improved Bunkers (Positioning & Design)	3.21 out of 5 very important
Q10d Creation of Winter Teeing Grounds (Year-round Playability)	3.48 out of 5 very important
Q11 How important do you feel the following areas are at Belleisle golf Course? A breakdown of how of respondents who mostly play at this course responded is available in the Details of this report.	
Q11a Improved Drainage on Holes 1, 2/3, 5/10, 8, 12, 13 (Year-round Playability)	4.29 out of 5 very important
Q11b Improved Bunkers (Positioning & Design)	3.53 out of 5 very important
Q11c Creation of Winter Teeing Grounds (Year-round Playability)	3.73 out of 5 very important
Q11d Woodland Management (Trees & Shrubs)	3.48 out of 5 very important
Q11e Grassland Renovation (Rough - Playability)	3.75 out of 5 very important
Q12 How important do you feel the following areas are at Seafield Golf Course? A breakdown of how of respondents who mostly play at this course responded is available in the Details of this report.	
Q12a Improved Drainage on Holes 1, 2, 3, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18 (Year-round Playability)	4.25 out of 5 very important
Q12b Creation of Beginner / Junior Tees (Development)	3.42 out of 5 very important
Q12c Creation of Winter Teeing Grounds (Year-round Playability)	3.67 out of 5 very important
Q12d Rerouting Golf Course to create 2 loops of 9 holes. (Development)	2.54 out of 5 very important
Q12e Woodland Management (Trees & Shrubs)	3.38 out of 5 very important
Q13 How important do you feel the following areas are at Dalmilling golf Course? A breakdown of how of respondents who mostly play at this course responded is available in the Details of this report.	
Q13a Improved Drainage on Holes 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 (Year-round Playability)	4.23 out of 5 very important
Q13b Creation of Beginner / Junior Tees (Development)	3.32 out of 5 very important
Q13c Creation of Winter Teeing Grounds (Year-round Playability)	3.64 out of 5 very important
Q13d Grassland Renovation (Rough – Playability)	3.51 out of 5 very important
Q13e Woodland Management (Trees & Shrubs)	3.34 out of 5 very important



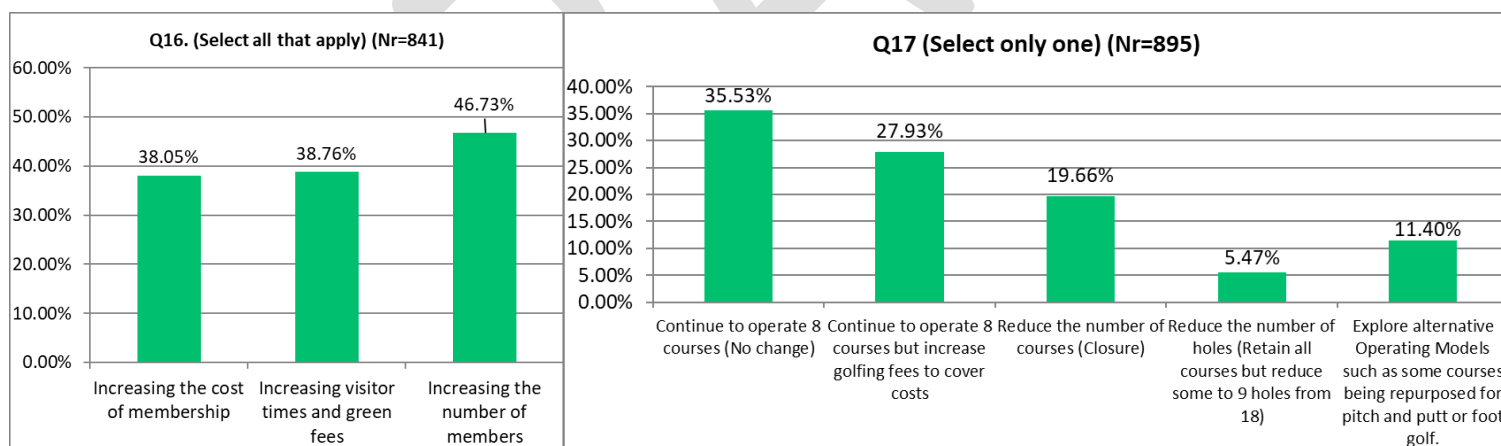
Question Topic	Overall Result Score
Q14 How important do you feel the following areas are at Girvan Golf Course? A breakdown of how of respondents who mostly play at this course responded is available in the Details of this report.	
Q14a Improved Drainage on Holes 2, 5, 9, 11 (Year-round Playability)	4.06 out of 5 very important
Q14b Creation of Beginner / Junior Tees (Development)	3.29 out of 5 very important
Q14c Grassland Renovation (Rough – Playability)	3.44 out of 5 very important
Q14d Woodland Management (Trees & Shrubs)	3.26 out of 5 very important
Q15 How important do you feel the following areas are at Maybole golf Course? A breakdown of how of respondents who mostly play at this course responded is available in the Details of this report.	
Q15a Creation of Beginner / Junior Tees (Development)	3.22 out of 5 very important
Q15b Grassland Renovation (Rough – Playability)	3.16 out of 5 very important
Q15c Woodland Management (Trees & Shrubs)	3.02 out of 5 very important

**Table 1: Results of questions 1 to 15.**

**3.5. Questions 16 to 22 - Future considerations of golf in South Ayrshire.**

3.5.1. Specifically question 16 was about how to increase income so all eight Golf South Ayrshire courses could be retained and maintained to the same level . Respondents could choose as many of the three options provided as they wished. Almost half of respondents (47%) said increase membership numbers, two fifths (39%) said increase visitor times and green fees and two fifths (38%) said increase cost of membership.

3.5.2. Question 17 asked what the Council should do with regard to it’s 8 public golf courses running at a loss each year. Five options were provided but only a single option could be selected. The most popular option chosen with over a third (36%) of responses was continue to operate 8 courses with no change followed by nearly 3 out of 10 (28%) responses to continue to operate 8 courses but increase golfing fees to cover costs. One in 5 (20%) responses were to reduce the number of courses.



**Chart 1: Overall results of Q16 and Q17.**

3.5.3. Questions 18 and 19 were open ended questions asking for the three most important strategic challenges facing Golf South Ayrshire and three most important strategic opportunities that must be captured. ....

3.5.4. The average score to question 20 rating current practice facilities and support available is less than the midway point of the range of choices 1 very poor to 5 excellent and is probably below what Golf South Ayrshire would like thus indicating definite improvement is required. Following this, the result of question 21 which asks whether the respondent favours development of a golf academy/driving range, is not surprising as 3 out of 4 (75%) respondents are in favour of developing a new golf academy/driving range. Comments .....

Question Topic	Overall Result Score
Q20. How would you rate the current practice facilities and support available to develop new players and young people into the game?	2.25 out of 5 excellent
Q21. Would you favour the development of a golf academy/driving range?	76% Yes

**Table 2: Results of questions 20 and 21.**

3.5.5. Question 22 asks for other comments to provide a better service. There were almost 500 replies to this question with many replies having comments on more than one issue or topic. Comments have been collated into the following themes with the three main themes being tee times, improvements and management. More in-depth sample lists of comments and suggestions are provided later in the “Details” section of this report.

- Booking system/tee times.
- Improvements.
- Management
- Fees.
- Play.
- Positive.
- Practice and other models.
- Catering.
- Other general comments.

3.5.6. The most popular issue in approximately one in five replies is about booking tee times. Three quarters of these responses on booking tee times came from club members. The main issue was not being able to make block bookings meaning their clubs could not play as a club which hampered and slowed play and also affected the clubs after game social activities. Booking tee times was also the most popular issue with non-club members.

3.5.7. There are a multitude of improvements, nearly one in five comments, recommended mostly by club members encompassing the state of courses and surrounding environment. Troon courses particularly the Darley course came into criticism regarding rabbit holes being trip hazards and making fairways unplayable, golfers not repairing divots or pitch marks and rubbish lying around the course. A list of typical comments and suggestions for individual courses is also reported later in the “Details” section of this report.

3.5.8. Management of the courses came into criticism with about one in six comments about management. Communication and lack of trust between Golf SA and clubs seems to be an issue. There were also a number of ideas that could be worth investigating further.

3.5.9. About one in 12 comments were about fees including fee reductions and concessions being too generous and conflicting views that fees could be raised to improve facilities/courses but also should not be raised as any increase puts people off playing. There were also suggestions that outsiders to South Ayrshire should pay more and that what you pay should be based on number of holes played per course or number of courses played.

3.5.10. There were about one in 13 comments on the golfing experience. Respondents are not happy with the level of slow play and suggest ways to combat this as well as other suggestions to improve the experience of playing a round of golf.

3.5.11. Comments were not all negative as there were also many positive comments with about one in 13 comments having something positive to say about either the state of South Ayrshire golf courses or the way they are being managed.

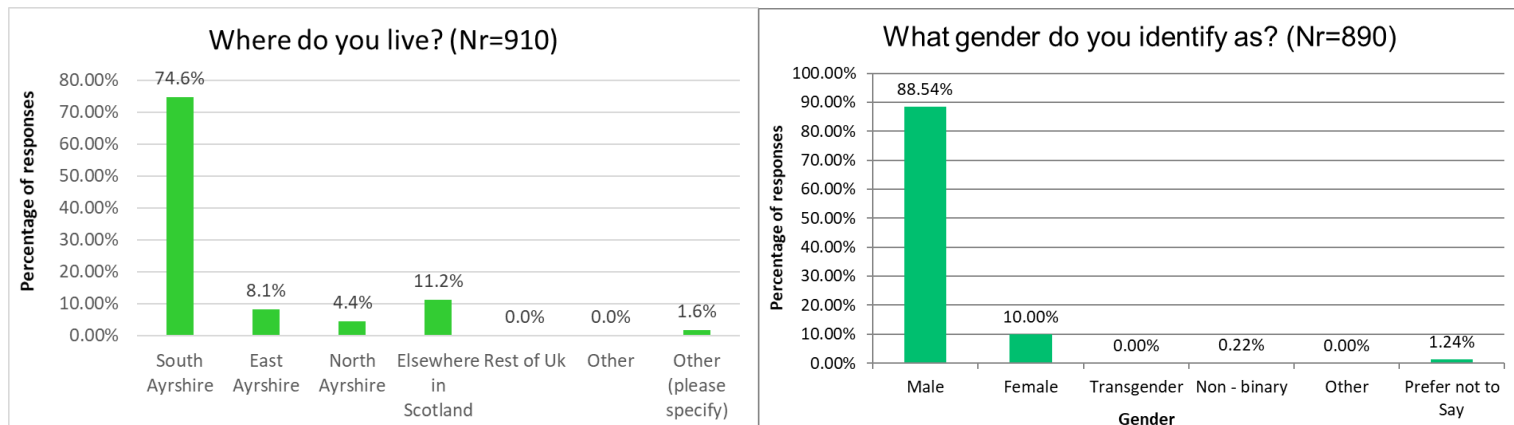
3.5.12. Practice facilities and suggestions for other models like junior golf clubs, driving ranges/academies were made in about one in 20 comments. Clubhouse and catering facilities were mentioned in about one in 25 comments. They were about opening hours and other uses for these facilities. There were also over 90 one off general comments covering a variety of subjects that are listed in the “Details” section of this report.

## 4. Details

### 4.1. Respondents

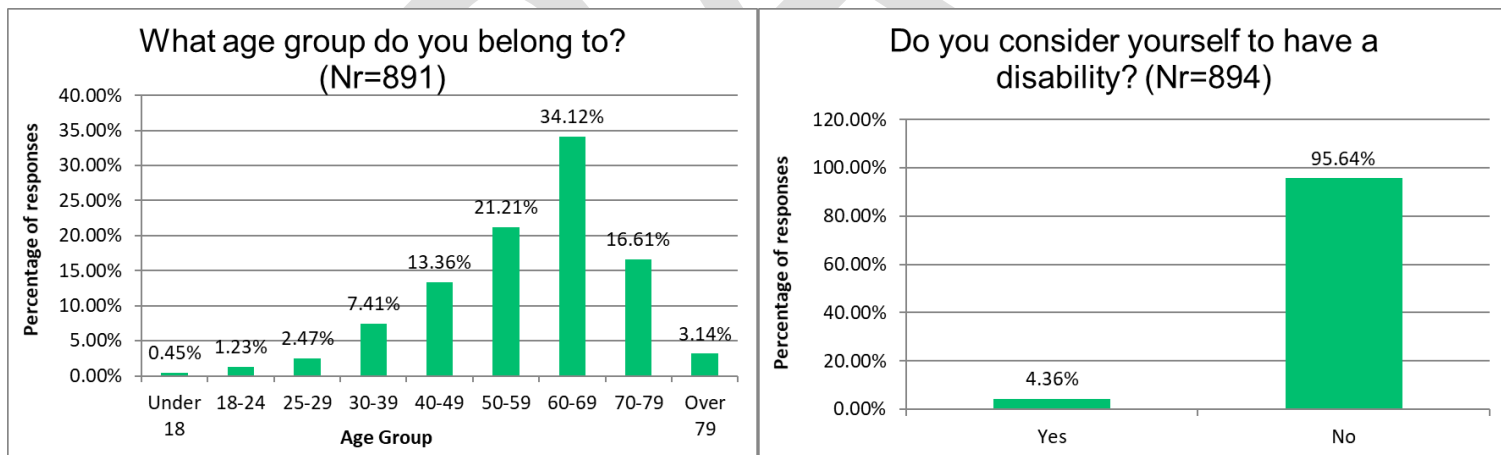
4.1.1. To gain some insight into who answered the survey, respondents were asked a number of demographic questions about themselves and about their golf playing history. Respondents could answer as many or as few of the demographic questions as they wished. Generally, at least 97% of all respondents replied to each demographic question.

4.1.1. The majority (75%) of respondents live in South Ayrshire and were predominantly male.



**Chart 2: Where respondents live and what gender they are.**

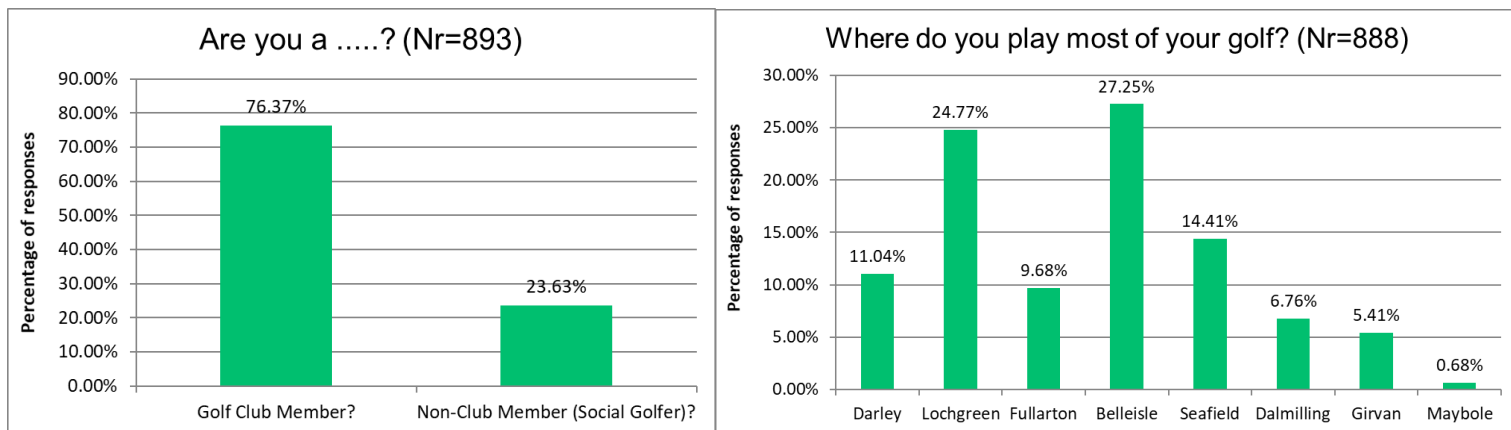
4.1.2. Respondents mostly belong to the older age groups with less than 40 being under 30 years of age. Less than 40 respondents consider themselves to have a disability.



**Chart 3: Age of respondents and their disability status.**

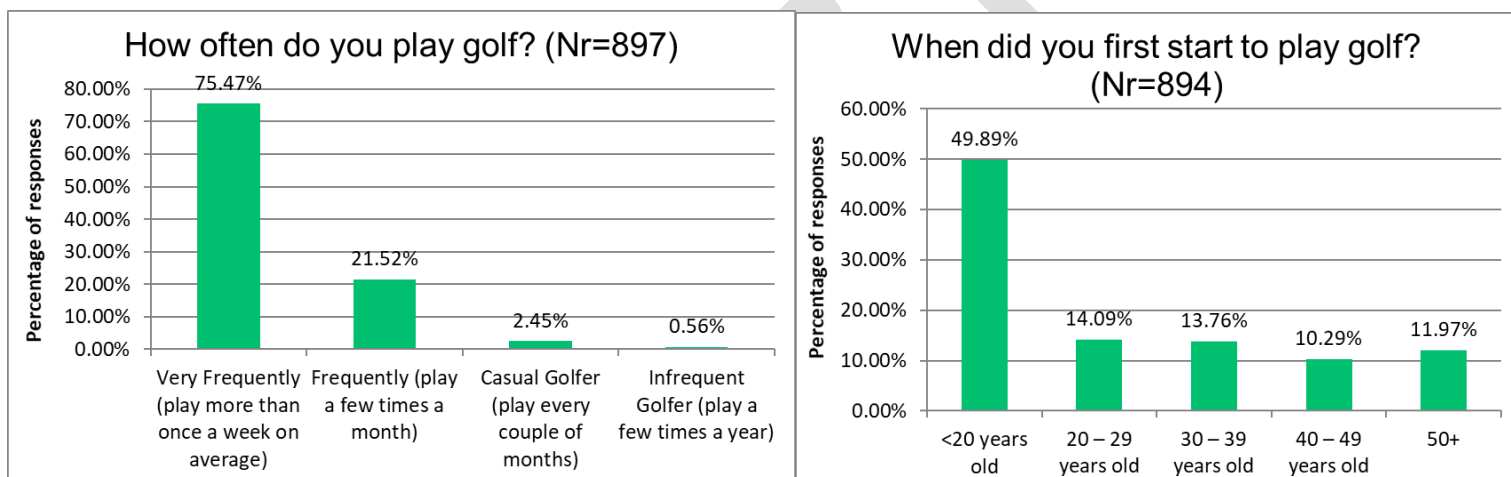
4.1.3. The majority (76%) of respondents are golf club members and just over half of respondents play most of their golf at either Belleisle or Lochgreen golf courses. Less than 10 of the respondents play the majority of their golf at Maybole golf course.





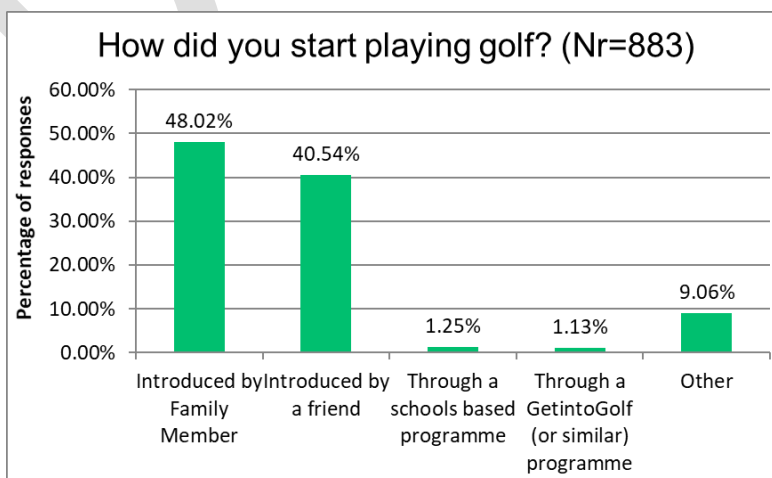
**Chart 4: Golf club membership and course where respondents mostly play their golf.**

4.1.4. The majority (75%) of respondents play golf very frequently i.e. more than once a week. Less than 30 respondents were either casual golfers who play every couple of months or infrequent golfers who play a few times a year. Half of respondents first started to play golf when they were under 20 years of age.



**Chart 5: Frequency of playing golf and age when introduced to playing golf.**

4.1.5. Respondents were predominantly introduced to playing golf by either a family member or a friend. Less than 25 of all respondents first started playing golf via an organised programme but this is probably a reflection of the age of the majority of respondents who would have started playing golf before organised programmes were introduced.



**Chart 6: How respondents first started playing golf.**

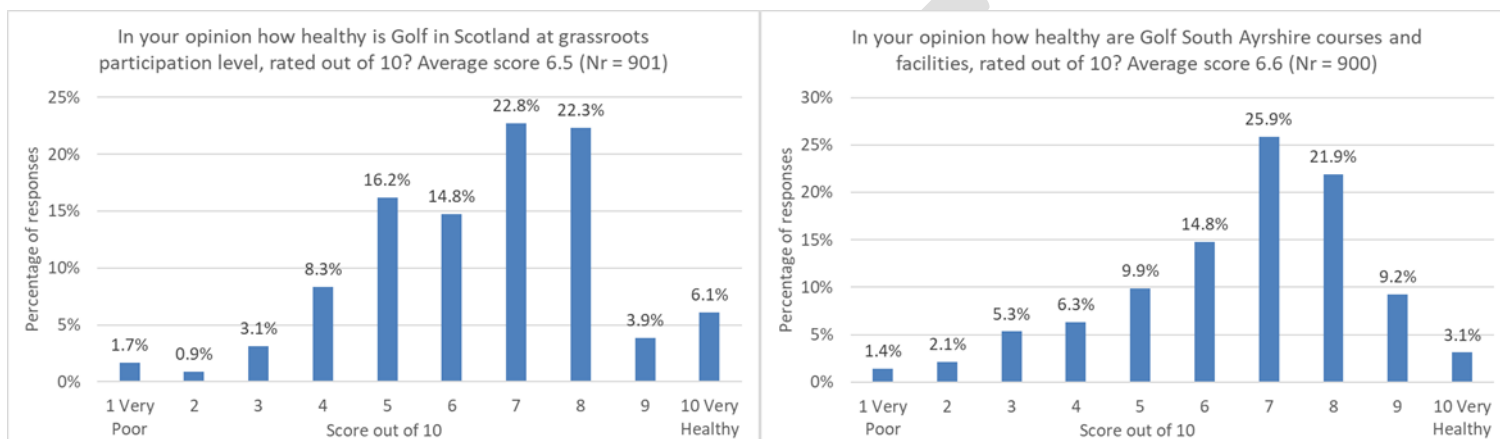
**4.2. Q1. How healthy is Golf in Scotland at grassroots participation level?**

4.2.1. Questions 1 and 2 asked respondents for their opinion rated out of 10 on the health of grassroots golf in Scotland and Golf South Ayrshire courses and facilities. Scores for both were very close and indicate respondents think these issues are moderately healthy but there is room for improvement.

4.2.2. There were 901 responses to Q1. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 10 very healthy. Scores tended to be towards the mid to higher end of the range. The overall average score was 6.49.

**4.3. Q2. How healthy are Golf South Ayrshire courses and facilities?**

4.3.1. There were 900 responses to Q2. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 10 very healthy. Scores tended to be towards the higher end of the range. The overall average score was 6.56.



**Chart 7: Overall results of Q1 and Q2.**

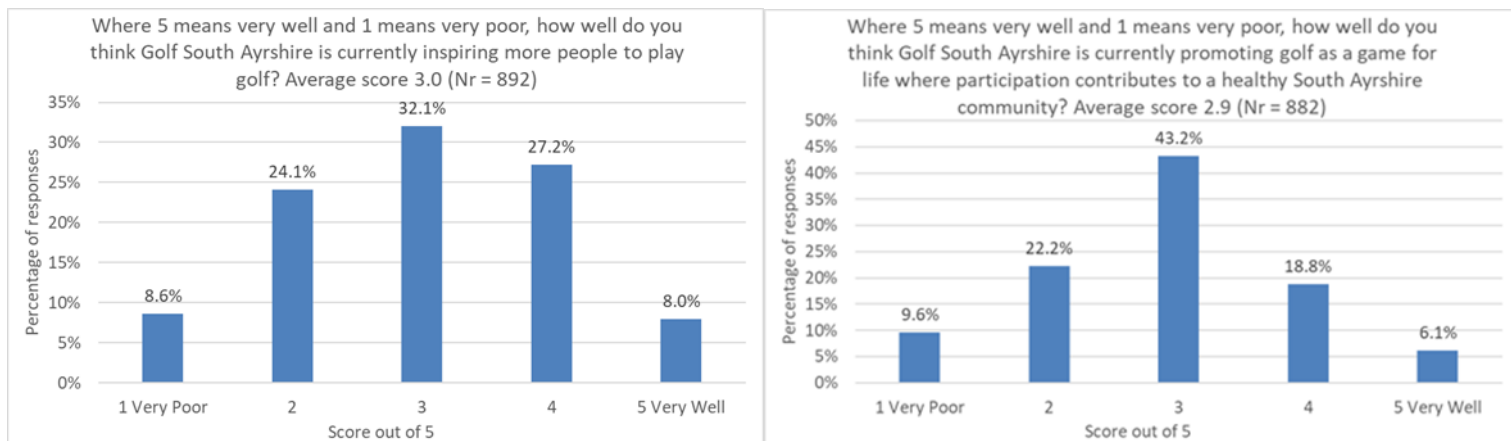
**4.4. Q3. How well do you think Golf South Ayrshire is currently inspiring more people to play golf?**

4.4.1. Questions 3 to 5 asked respondents to rate how well Golf South Ayrshire is performing across a few areas. They were asked to rate where 5 means very well and 1 means very poor. Scores for each were similar with all indicating respondents think Golf South Ayrshire is performing moderately well but with room for improvement. Providing a choice of membership categories based on access and cost was rated the highest with 3.03 out of 5 and engaging and connecting with season ticket holders and potential ticket holders was rated the lowest at 2.66.

4.4.2. There were 892 responses to Q3. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 5 very well with the overall average score of 3.02.

**4.5. Q4. How well do you think Golf South Ayrshire is currently promoting golf as a game for life where participation contributes to a healthy South Ayrshire community?**

4.5.1. There were 882 responses to Q4. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 5 very well with the overall average score of 2.90.

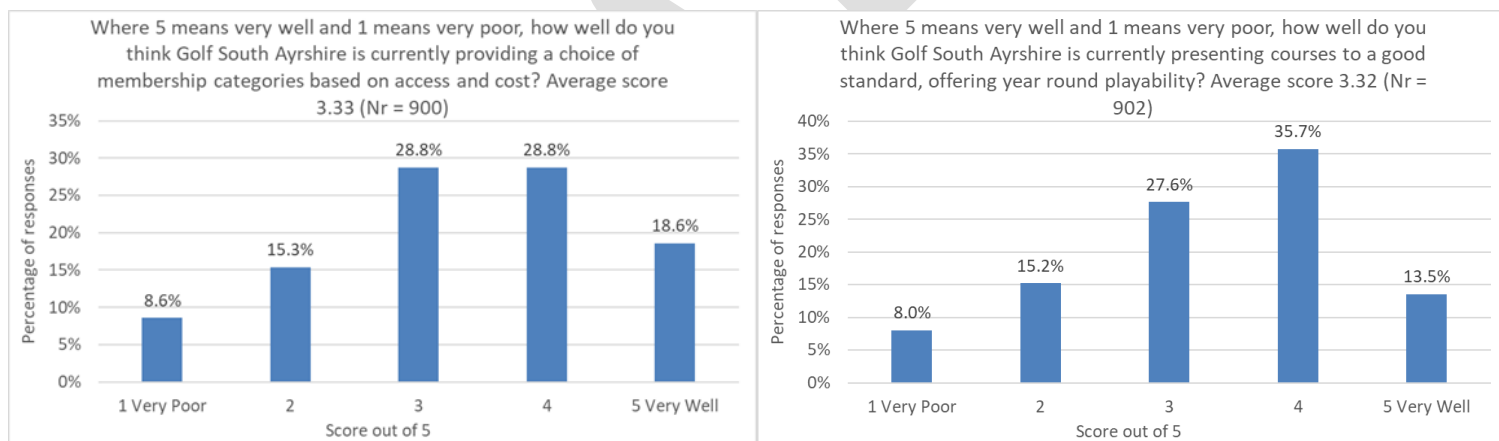


**Chart 8: Overall results of Q3 and Q4.**

**4.6. Q5. How well do you think Golf South Ayrshire is currently performing against the following areas:**

4.6.1. providing a choice of membership categories based on access and cost? There were 900 responses to Q5a. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 5 very well. The majority of scores were towards the higher end of the range with the overall average score of 3.33.

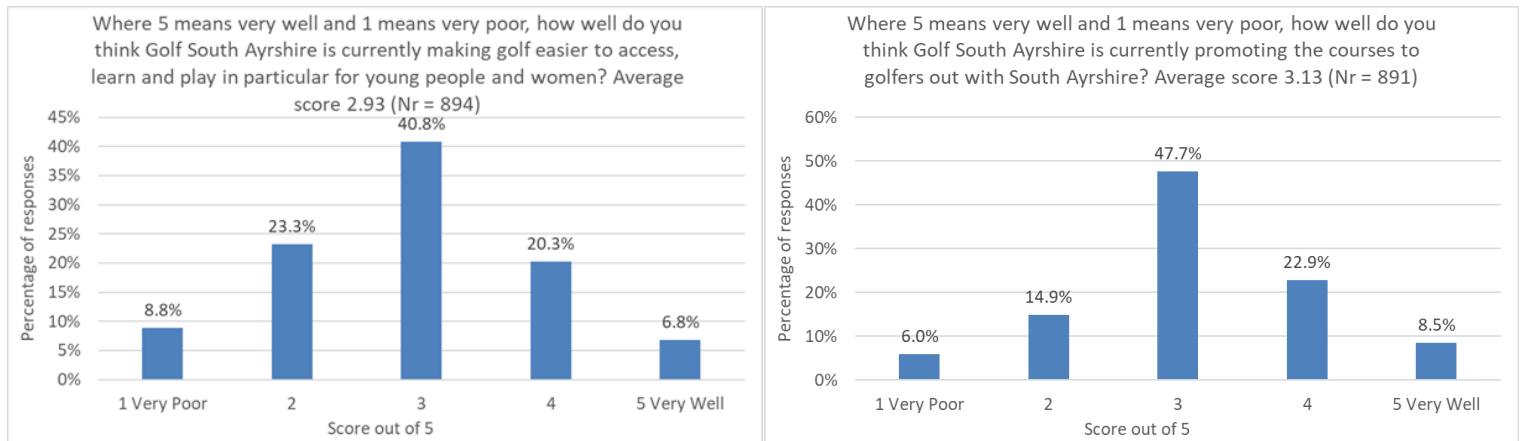
4.6.2. presenting courses to a good standard, offering year-round playability? There were 902 responses to Q5b. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 5 very well. The majority of scores were towards the higher half of the range. The overall average score was 3.32.



**Chart 9: Overall results of Q5a and Q5b.**

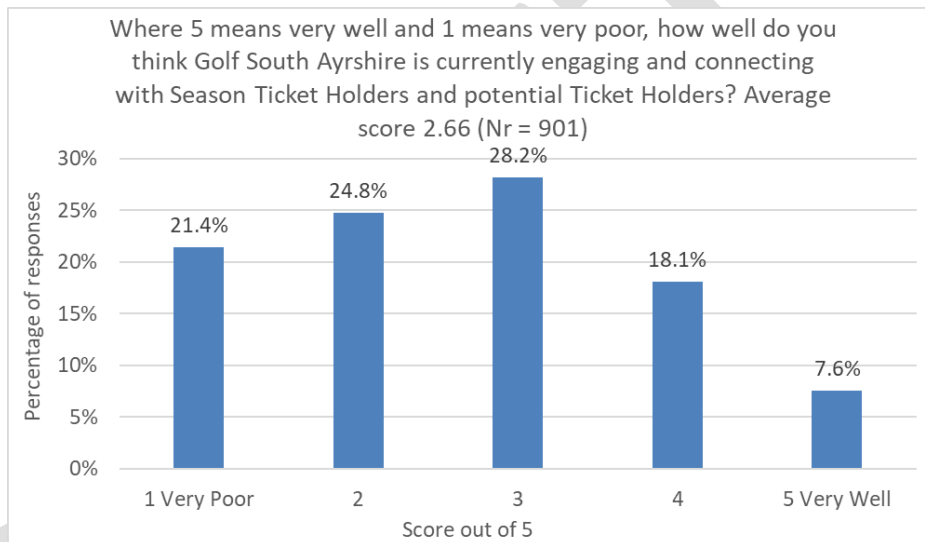
4.6.3. making golf easier to access, learn and play in particular for young people and women? There were 894 responses to Q5c. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 5 very well with the overall average score of 2.93.

4.6.4. promoting the courses to golfers out with South Ayrshire? There were 891 responses to Q5d. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 5 very well with the overall average score of 3.13.



**Chart 10: Overall results of Q5c and Q5d.**

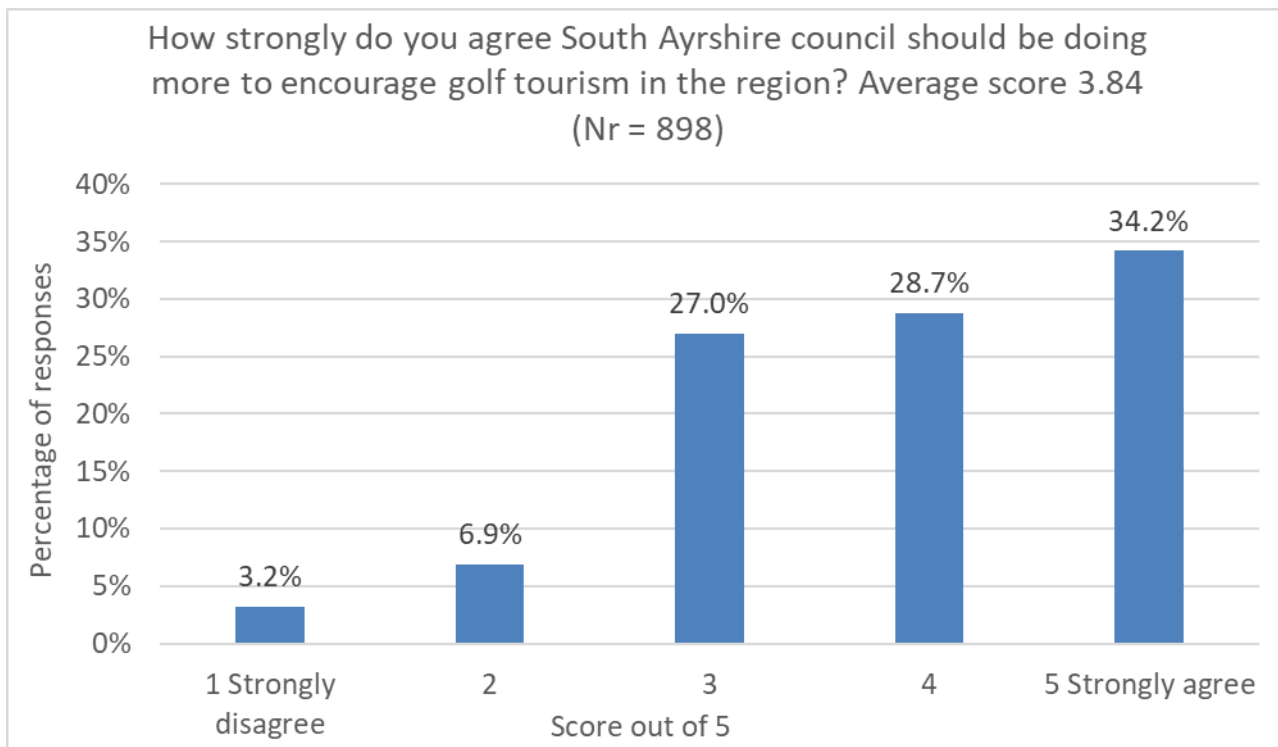
4.6.5. engaging and connecting with Season Ticket Holders and potential Ticket Holders? There were 901 responses to Q5e. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 5 very well. The majority of responses were towards the lower scores. The overall average score was 2.66.



**Chart 11: Overall result of Q5e.**

**4.7. Q6. How strongly do you agree South Ayrshire council should be doing more to encourage golf tourism in the region?**

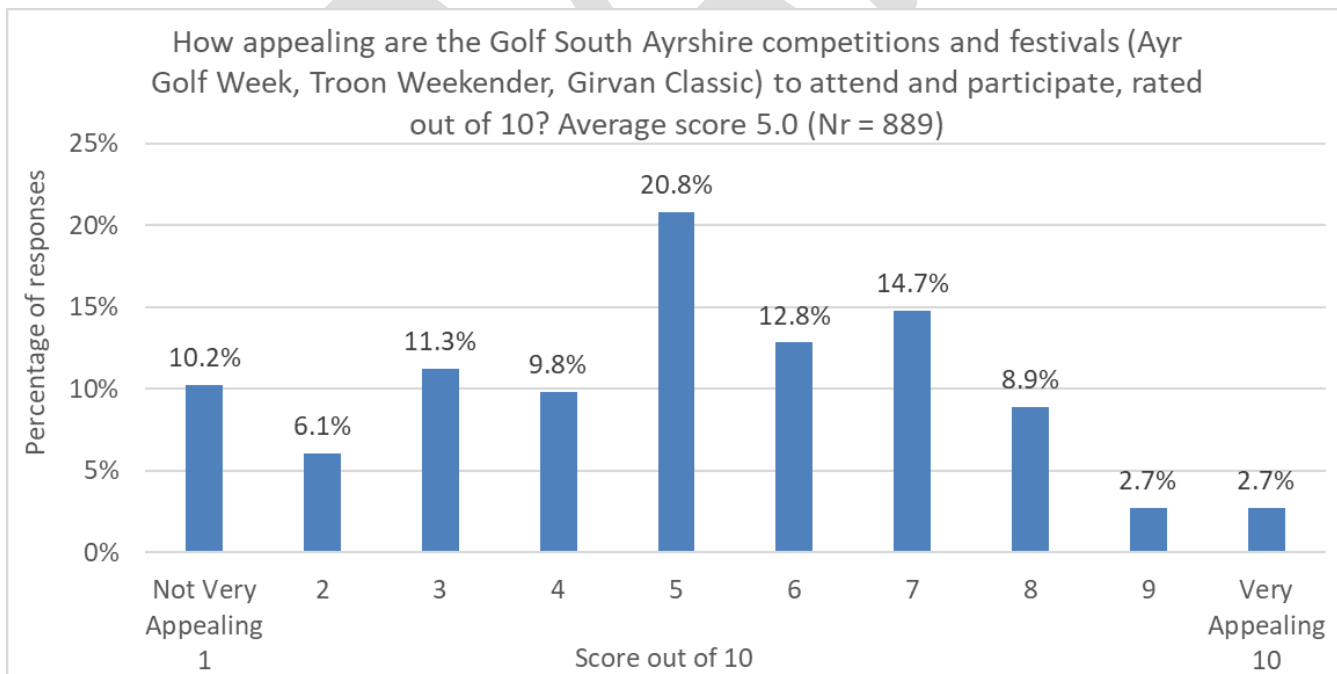
4.7.1. Before answering this question, respondents were made aware that golf is one of the main drivers for tourism in South Ayrshire. In 2014, it was estimated that South Ayrshire Council’s provision of golf was worth £3.9M to the local economy. There were 898 responses. One in 3 respondents strongly agree. Scores ranged from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree with the overall average score of 3.84.



**Chart 12: Overall result of Q6.**

**4.8. Q7. How appealing are the Golf South Ayrshire competitions and festivals (Ayr Golf Week, Troon Weekender, Girvan Classic) to attend and participate, rated out of 10?**

4.8.1. There were 889 responses. Scores ranged from 1 not very appealing to 10 very appealing with the overall average score of 5.02.

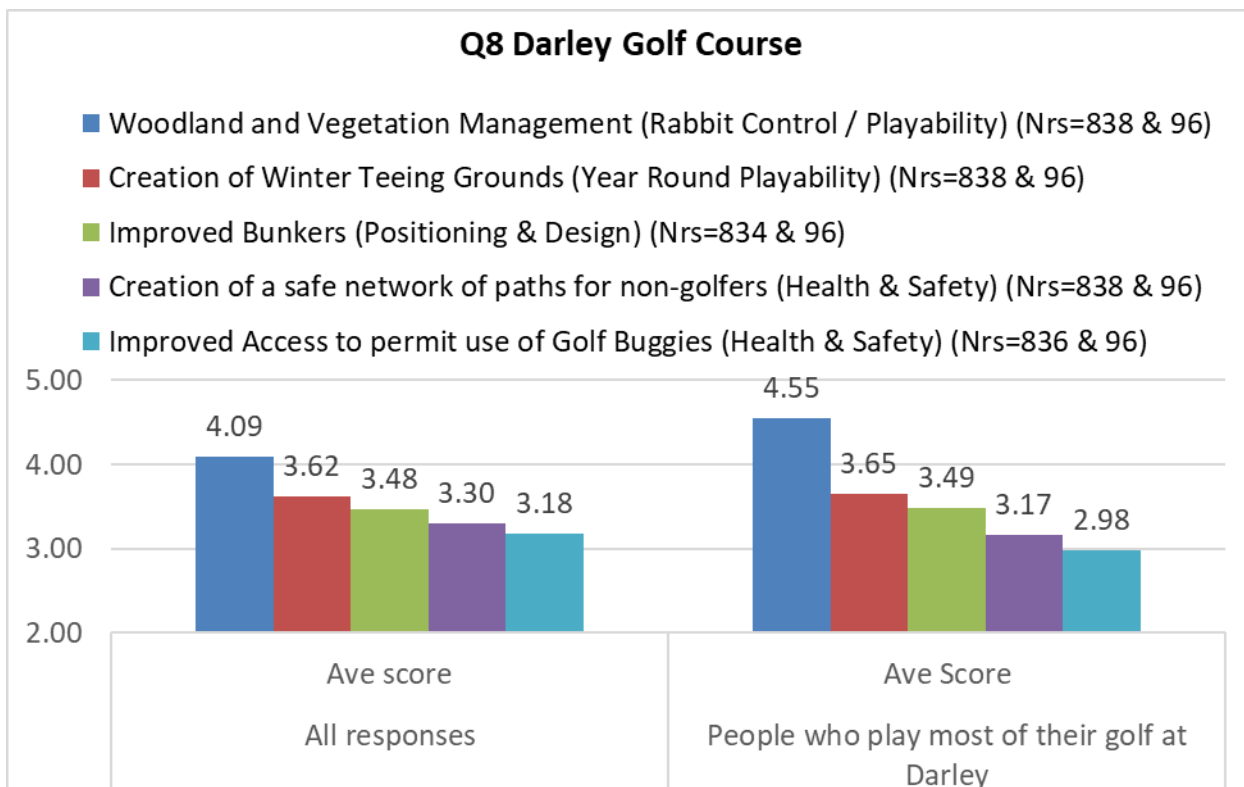


**Chart 13: Overall result of Q7.**



**4.9. Q8. Darley Golf Course. How important do you feel the following areas on the course are?**

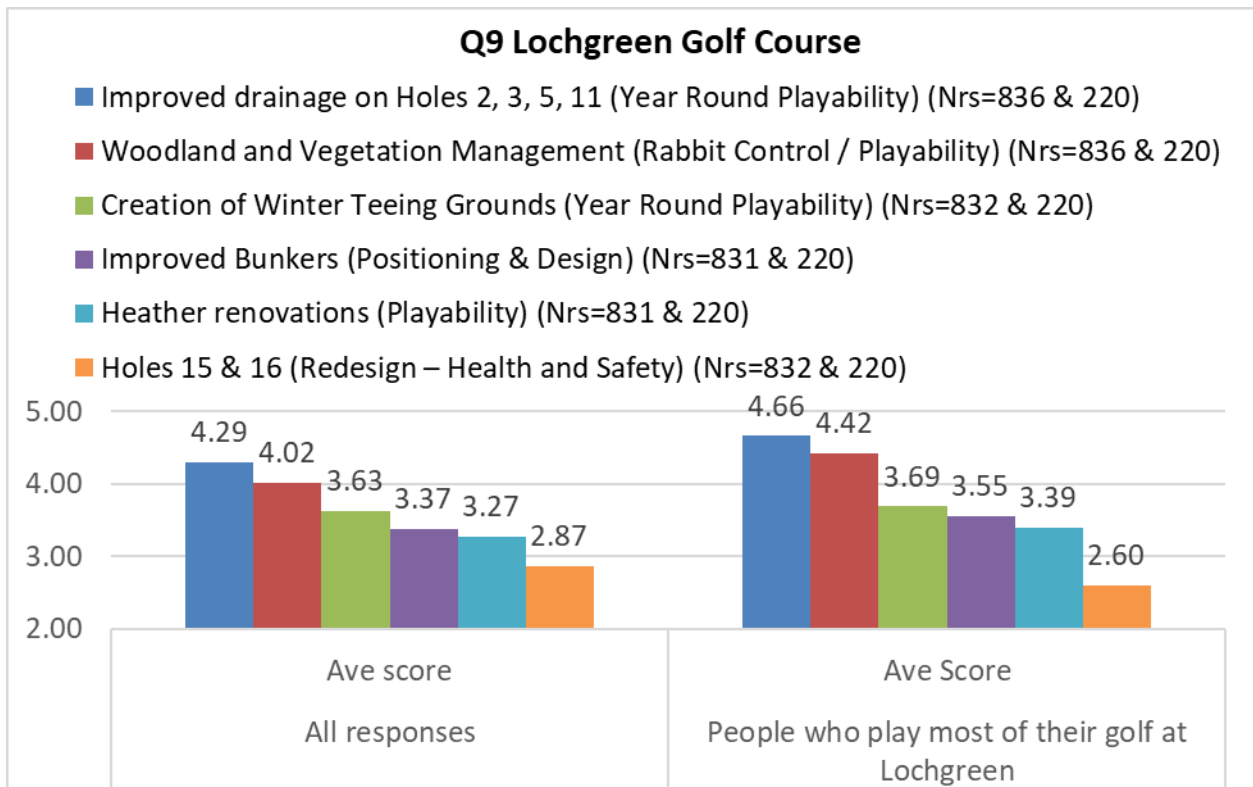
4.9.1. This question asked respondents to rate from 1 not important to 5 very important, how important five specific areas of concern are to them in relation to Darley golf course. Based on the average score for each area of concern, the five issues with their average score are shown in the chart below in order of most important to least important. Note the chart shows average scores using all survey responses to this question and also average scores using responses only from those respondents who indicated they mostly play on the Darley golf course. In both cases the order of importance is the same with woodland and vegetation management rated as most important and improved access to permit use of golf buggies least important.



**Chart 14: Combined result of all Q8 parts in order of most to least importance.**

**4.10. Q9. Lochgreen Golf Course. How important do you feel the following areas on the course are?**

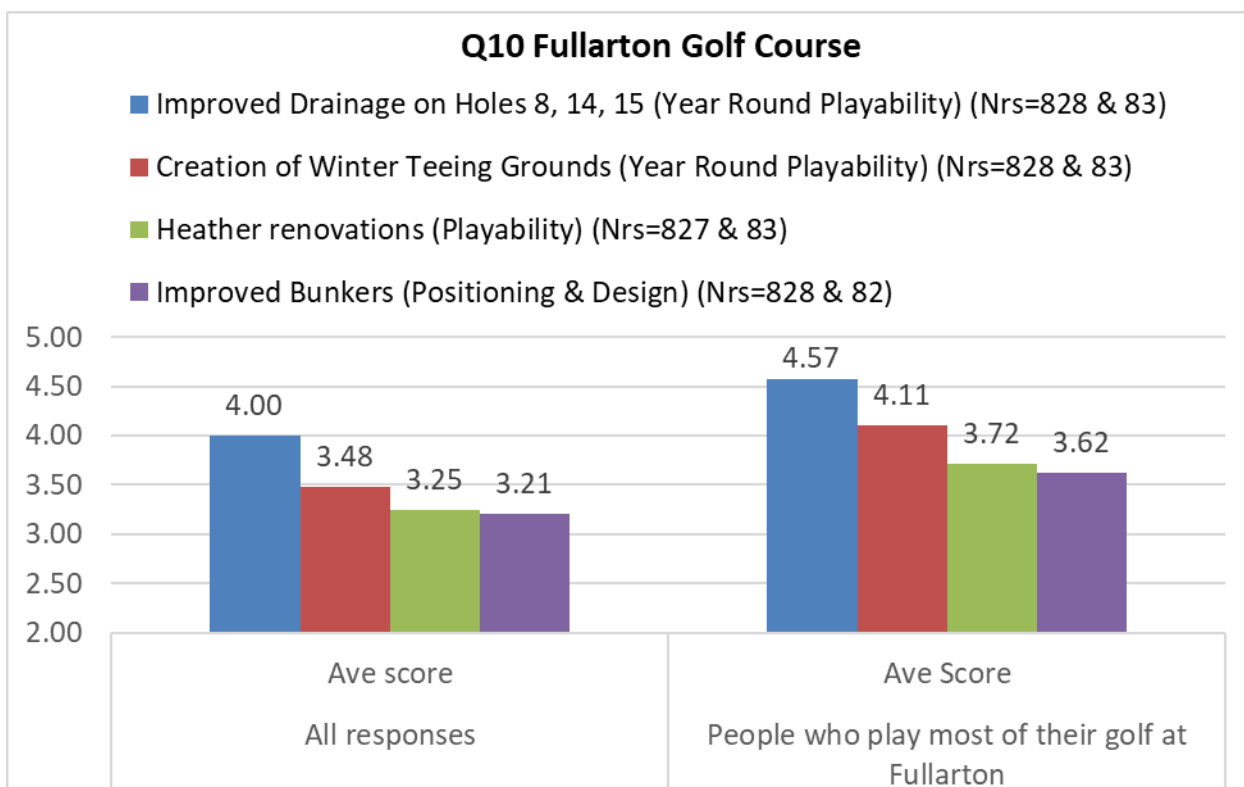
4.10.1. This question asked respondents to rate from 1 not important to 5 very important, how important six specific areas of concern are to them in relation to Lochgreen golf course. Based on the average score for each area of concern, the six issues with their average score are shown in the chart below in order of most important to least important. Note the chart shows average scores using all survey responses to this question and also average scores using responses only from those respondents who indicated they mostly play on the Lochgreen golf course. In both cases the order of importance is the same with improved drainage on holes 2, 3, 5 and 11 rated as most important and redesign of holes 15 and 16 for health and safety as least important.



**Chart 15: Combined result of all Q9 parts in order of most to least importance.**

**4.11. Q10. Fullarton Golf Course. How important do you feel the following areas on the course are?**

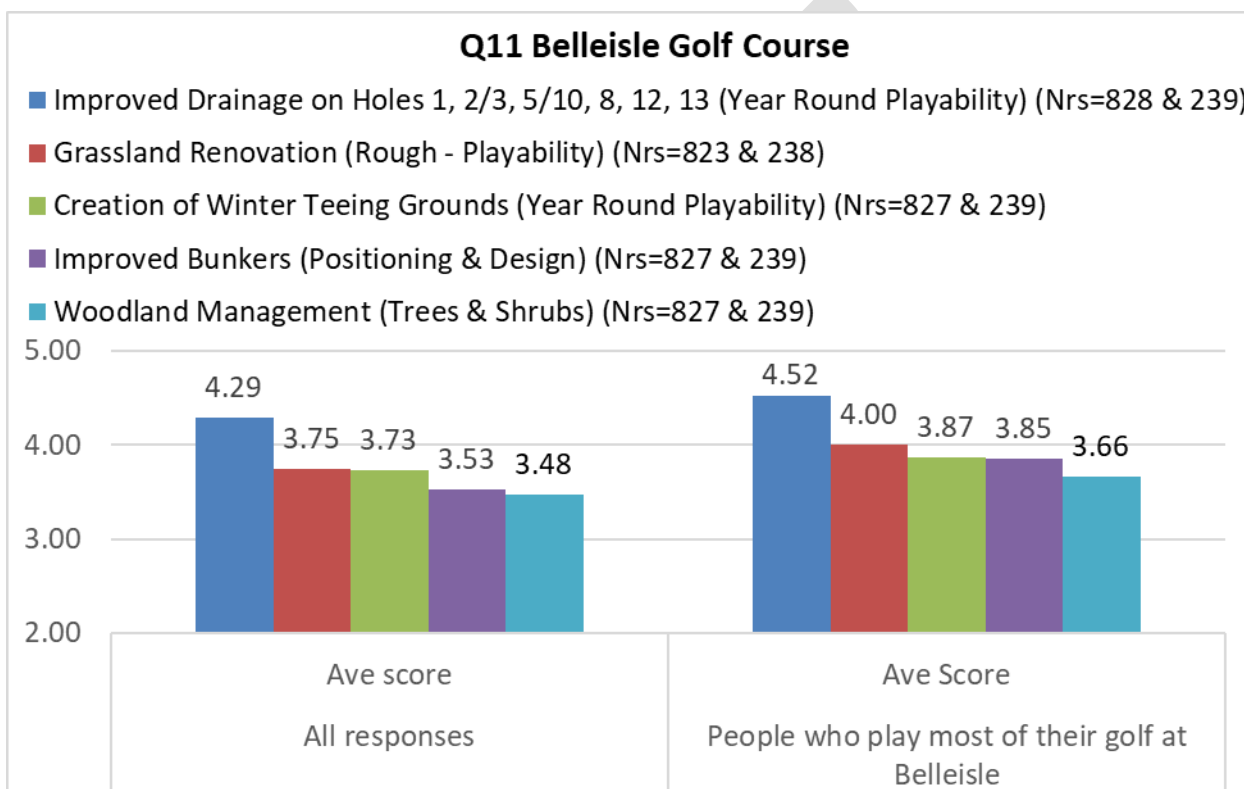
4.11.1. This question asked respondents to rate from 1 not important to 5 very important, how important four specific areas of concern are to them in relation to Fullarton golf course. Based on the average score for each area of concern, the four issues with their average score are shown in the chart below in order of most important to least important. Note the chart shows average scores using all survey responses to this question and also average scores using responses only from those respondents who indicated they mostly play on the Fullarton golf course. In both cases the order of importance is the same with improved drainage on holes 4, 14 and 15 for year-round playability rated as most important and improved bunkers (positioning and design) least important.



**Chart 16: Combined result of all Q10 parts in order of most to least importance.**

**4.12. Q11. Belleisle Golf Course. How important do you feel the following areas on the course are?**

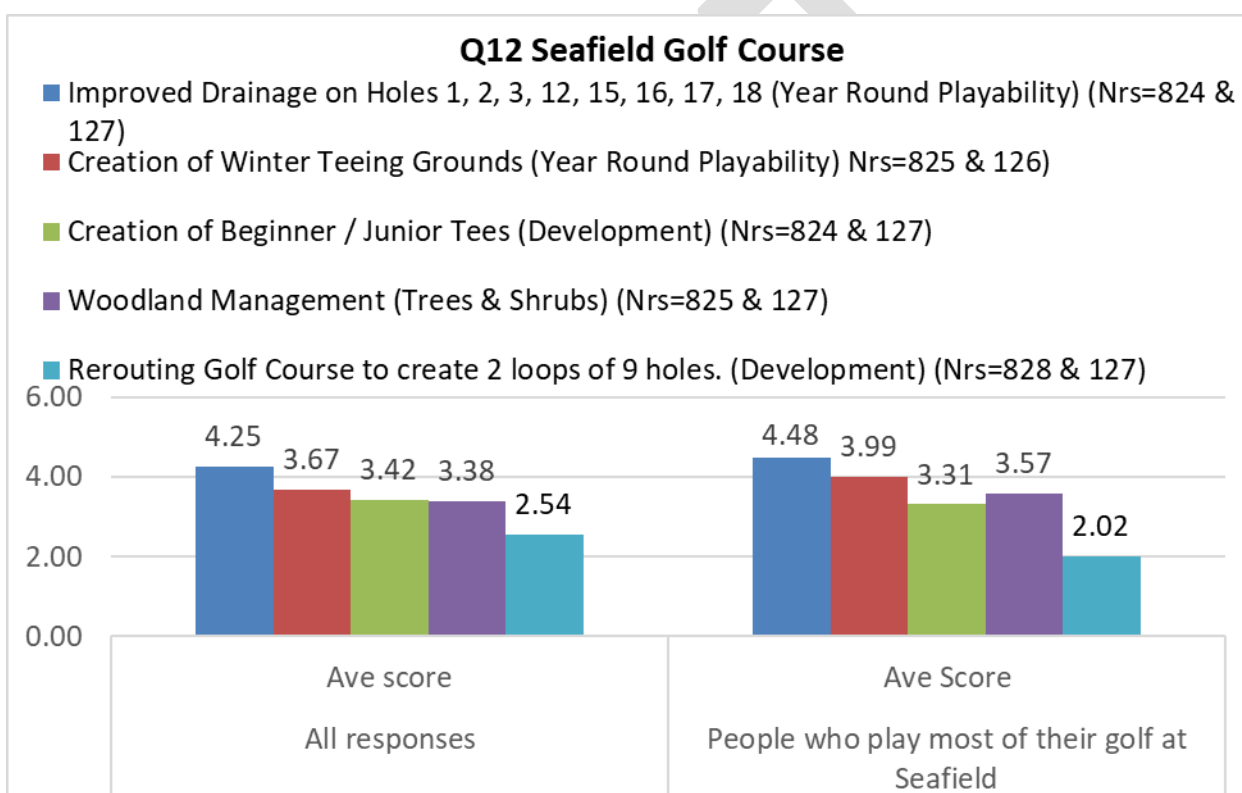
4.12.1. This question asked respondents to rate from 1 not important to 5 very important, how important five specific areas of concern are to them in relation to Belleisle golf course. Based on the average score for each area of concern, the five issues with their average score are shown in the chart below in order of most important to least important. Note the chart shows average scores using all survey responses to this question and also average scores using responses only from those respondents who indicated they mostly play on the Belleisle golf course. In both cases the order of importance is the same with improved drainage on holes 1, 2/3, 5/10, 8, 12 and 13 for year-round playability rated as most important and woodland management of trees and shrubs as least important.



**Chart 17: Combined result of all Q11 parts in order of most to least importance.**

**4.13. Q12. Seafield Golf Course. How important do you feel the following areas on the course are?**

4.13.1. This question asked respondents to rate from 1 not important to 5 very important, how important five specific areas of concern are to them in relation to Seafield golf course. Based on the average score for each area of concern, the five issues with their average score are shown in the chart below in order of most important to least important. Note the chart shows average scores using all survey responses to this question and also average scores using responses only from those respondents who indicated they mostly play on the Seafield golf course. The order of importance is NOT the same for both groups of respondents however both groups agree the improved drainage on holes 1, 2, 3, 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18 for year-round playability is most important and rerouting the golf course to create 2 loops of 9 holes is least important. The two groups differ on how important the creation of beginner/junior tees and woodland management of trees and shrubs is with those who play most of their golf at Seafield golf course rating the latter as slightly more important than the former but still only third most important out of the five areas of concern.

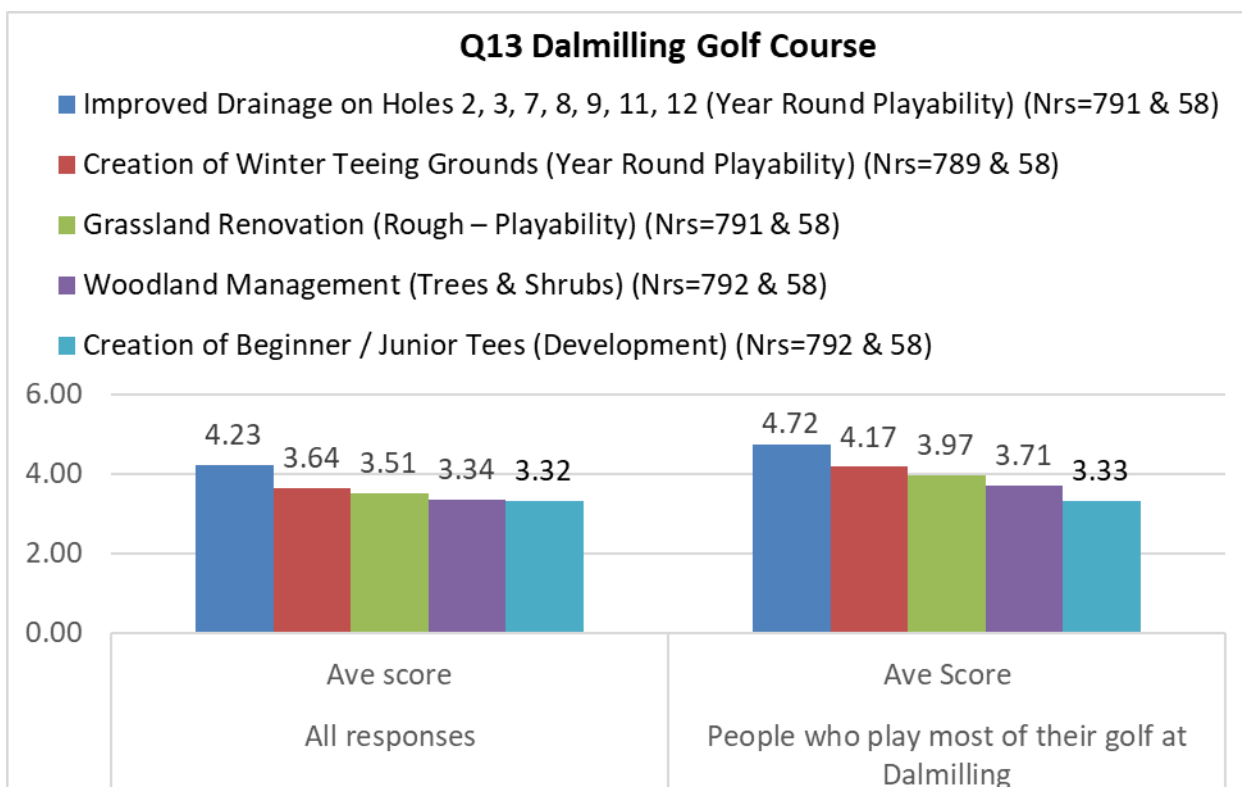


**Chart 18: Combined result of all Q12 parts in order of most to least importance.**



**4.14. Q13. Dalmilling Golf Course. How important do you feel the following areas on the course are?**

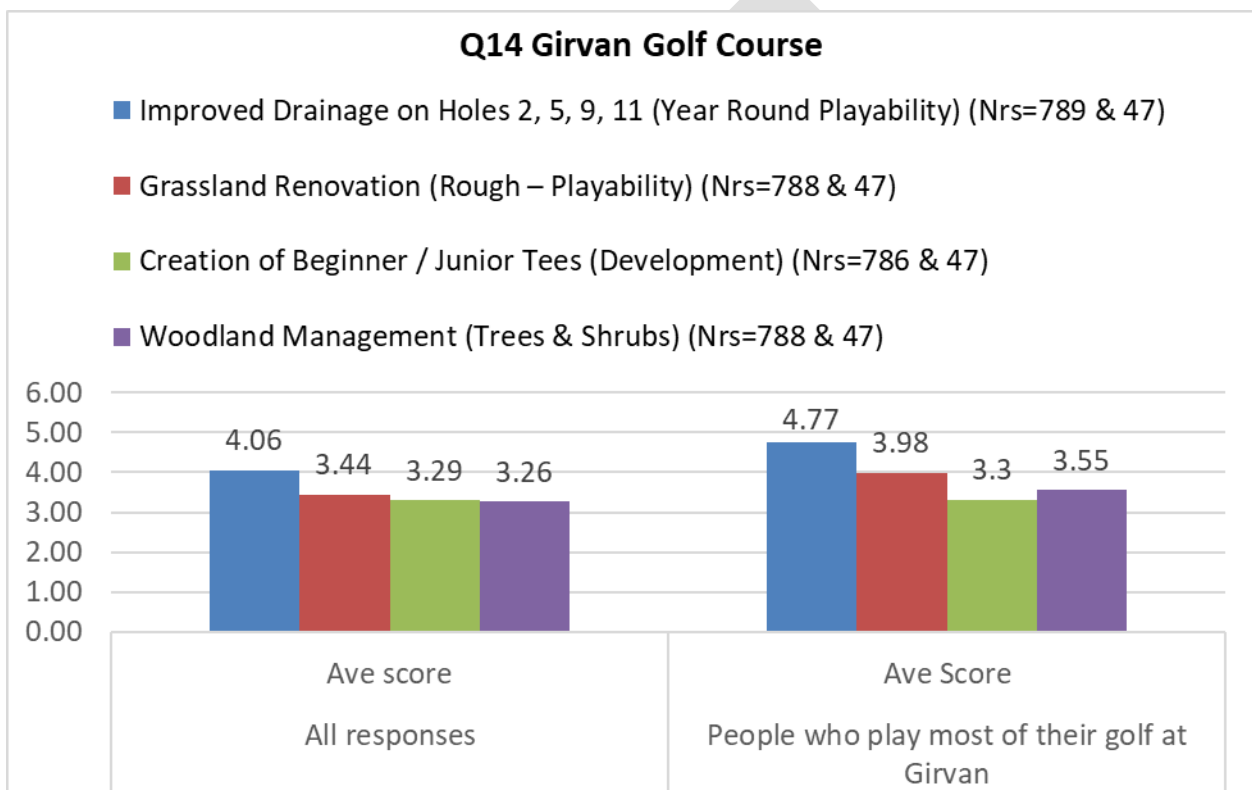
4.14.1. This question asked respondents to rate from 1 not important to 5 very important, how important five specific areas of concern are to them in relation to Dalmilling golf course. Based on the average score for each area of concern, the five issues with their average score are shown in the chart below in order of most important to least important. Note the chart shows average scores using all survey responses to this question and also average scores using responses only from those respondents who indicated they mostly play on the Dalmilling golf course. In both cases the order of importance is the same with improved drainage on holes 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 for year-round playability rated as most important and the creation of beginner/junior tees as least important.



**Chart 19: Combined result of all Q13 parts in order of most to least importance.**

**4.15. Q14. Girvan Golf Course. How important do you feel the following areas on the course are?**

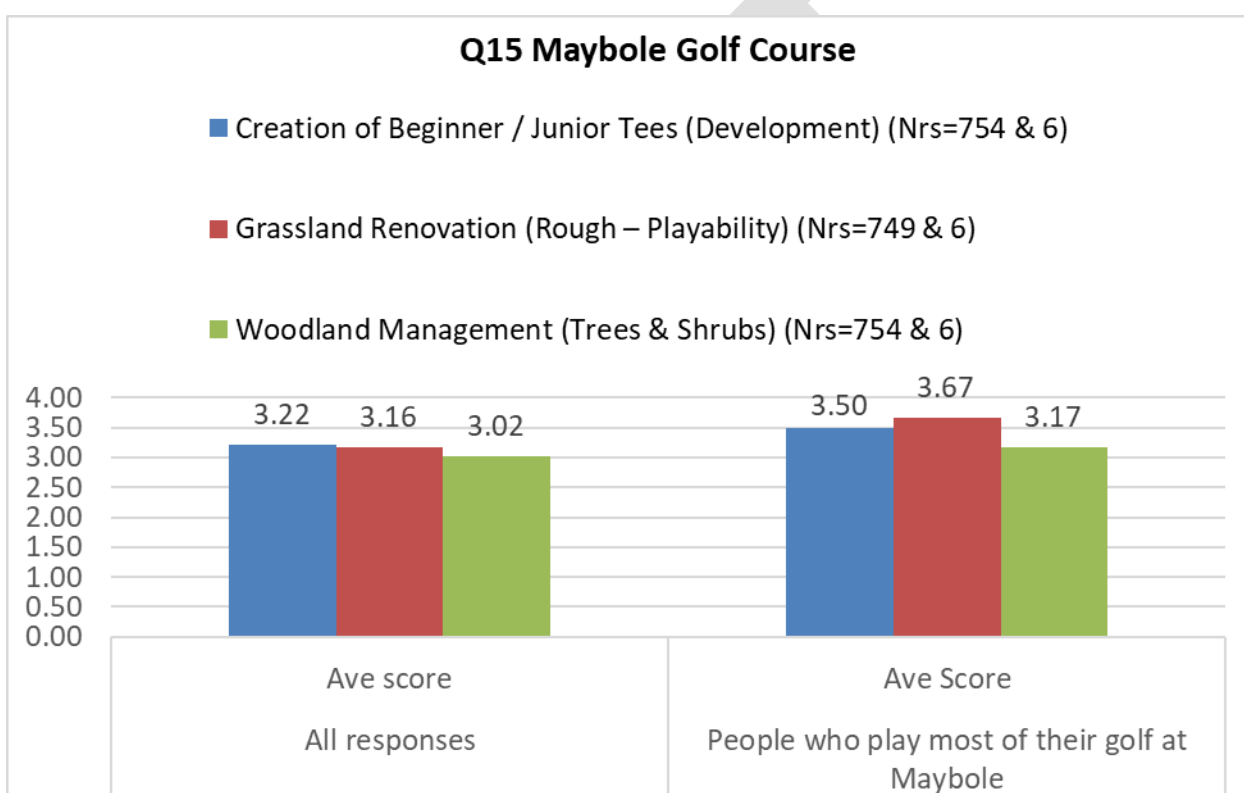
4.15.1. This question asked respondents to rate from 1 not important to 5 very important, how important four specific areas of concern are to them in relation to Girvan golf course. Based on the average score for each area of concern, the four issues with their average score are shown in the chart below in order of most important to least important. Note the chart shows average scores using all survey responses to this question and also average scores using responses only from those respondents who indicated they mostly play on the Girvan golf course. The order of importance is NOT the same for both groups of respondents. Both groups rate the improved drainage of holes 2, 5, 9 and 11 for year-round playability as most important. However, the two groups have chosen a different issue as being of least importance. The overall response from all respondents rate woodland management of trees and shrubs as least important while those who play most of their golf at Girvan course rate the creation of beginner/junior tees as least important.



**Chart 20: Combined result of all Q14 parts in order of most to least importance.**

**4.16. Q15. Maybole Golf Course. How important do you feel the following areas on the course are?**

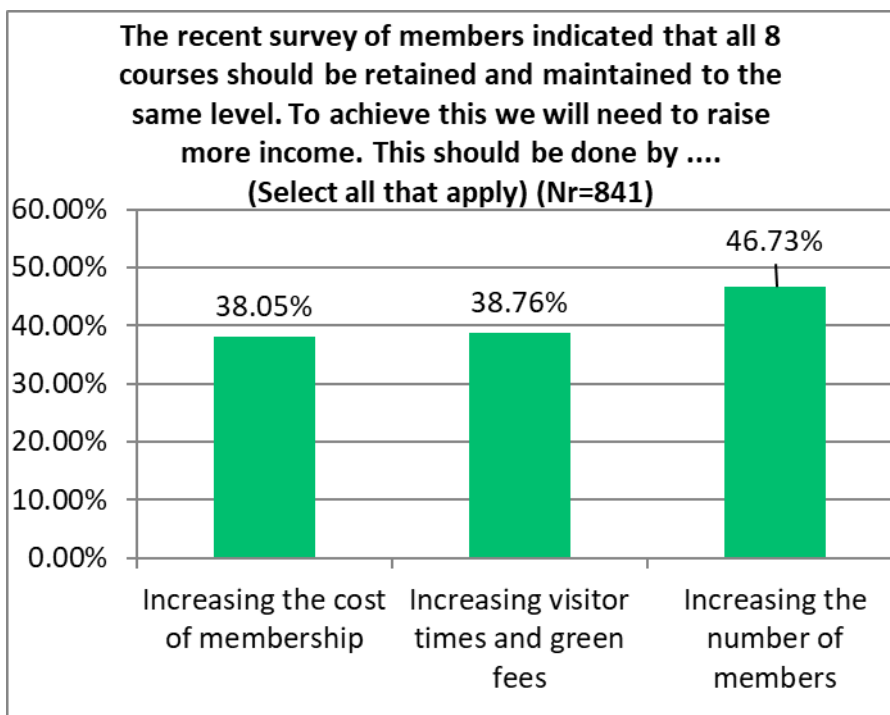
4.16.1. This question asked respondents to rate from 1 not important to 5 very important, how important three specific areas of concern are to them in relation to Maybole golf course. Based on the average score for each area of concern, the three issues with their average score are shown in the chart below in order of most important to least important. Note the chart shows average scores using all survey responses to this question and also average scores using responses only from those respondents who indicated they mostly play on the Maybole golf course. The order of importance is NOT the same for both groups of respondents. The two groups have chosen a different issue as being of most importance. The overall response from all respondents rate creation of beginner/junior tees as most important while those who play most of their golf at Maybole course rate the grassland renovation rough to playability as the most important issue. Both groups rate the woodland management of trees and shrubs as least important.



**Chart 21: Combined result of all Q15 parts in order of most to least importance.**

**4.17. Q16. The recent survey of members indicated that all 8 courses should be retained and maintained to the same level. To achieve this we will need to raise more income. This should be done by**

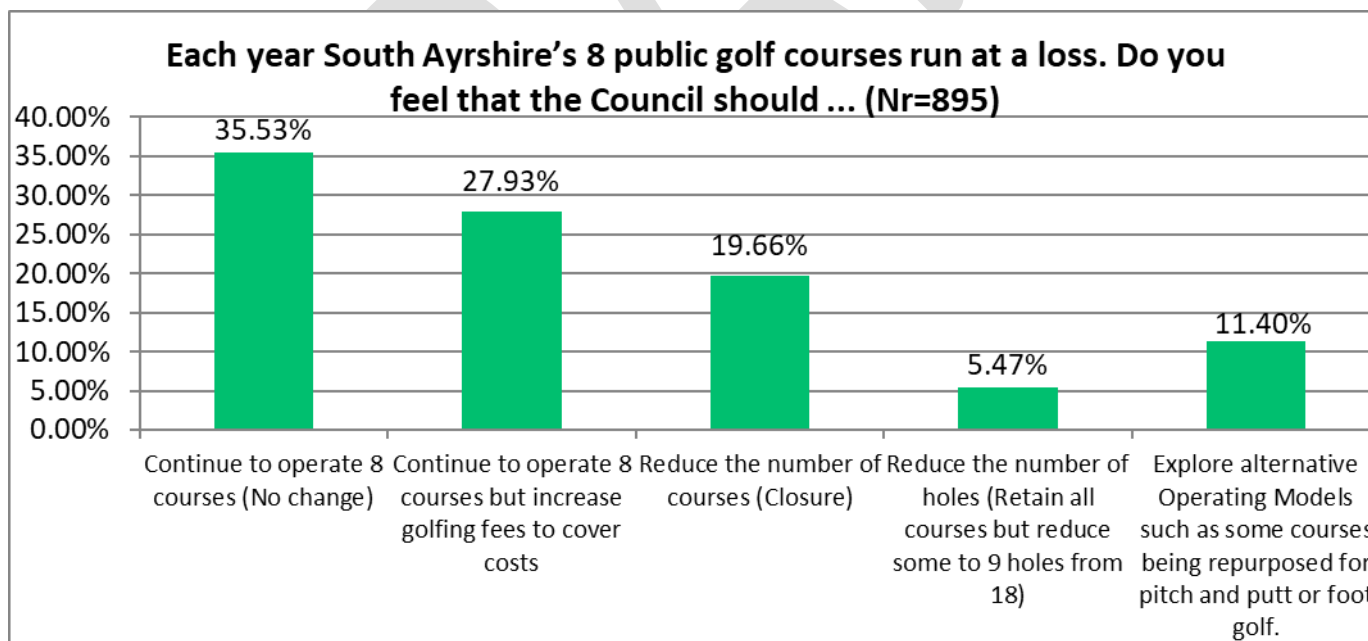
4.17.1. Respondents were given three choices for this question and could choose as many of the three options as they wished. Almost half of respondents chose increasing the number of members as the preferred option while 1 in 3 respondents also chose each of the other two options increase cost of membership and increase visitor times and green fees.



**Chart 22: Overall result of Q16.**

**4.18. Q17. Each year South Ayrshire’s 8 public golf courses run at a loss. Do you feel that the council should .....**

4.18.1. Respondents were given five choices but could only select one option. The most popular choice with over a third (35.53%) of selections was to continue to operate all 8 courses with no change.



**Chart 23: Overall result of Q17.**

**4.19. Q18. What do you think are the three most important strategic challenges that we are facing?**

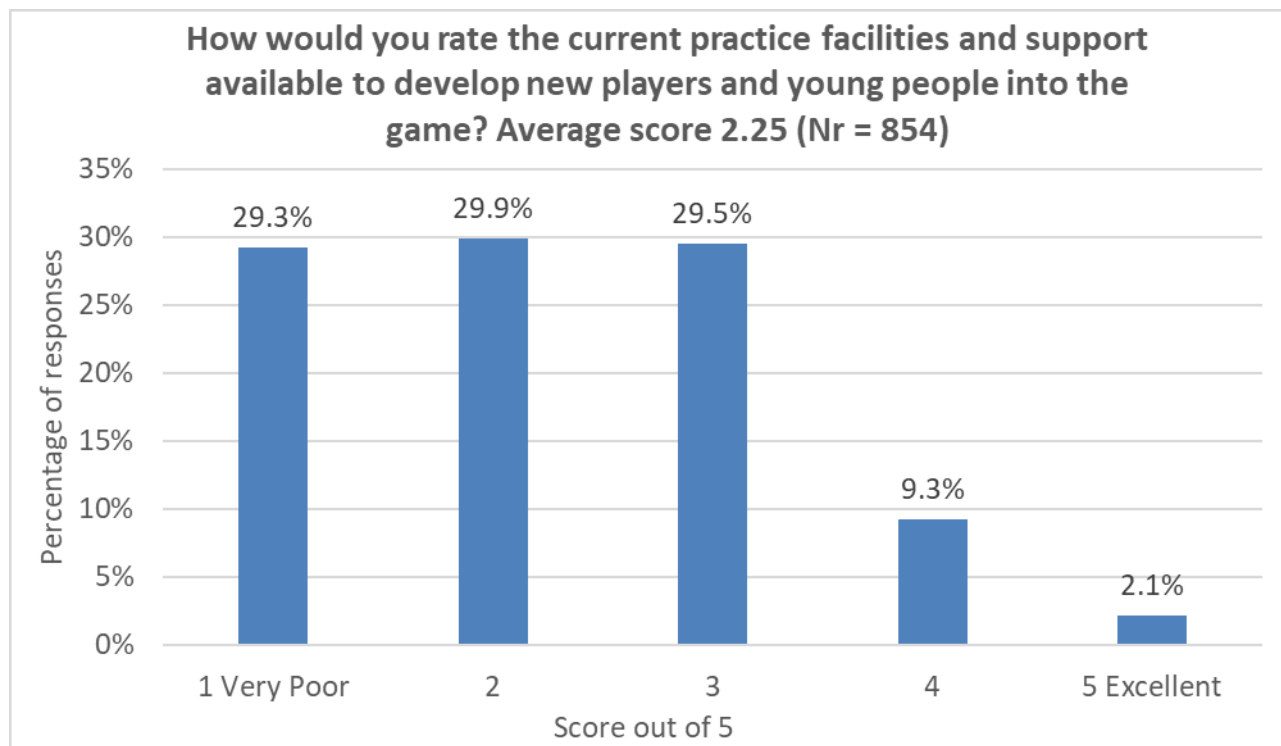
4.19.1. Respondents were asked to think of the future of golf in South Ayrshire when answering this question. ....

**4.20. Q19. What do you think are the three most important strategic opportunities we must capture?**

4.20.1. Respondents were asked to think of the future of golf in South Ayrshire when answering this question. ....

**4.21. Q20. How would you rate the current practice facilities and support available to develop new players and young people into the game?**

4.21.1. Respondents were told that creating future generations of golfers is vital to secure the long-term viability of the courses. There were 854 responses to Q20. Scores ranged from 1 very poor to 5 excellent. The vast majority of scores were towards the low end of the range with the overall average score of 2.25.

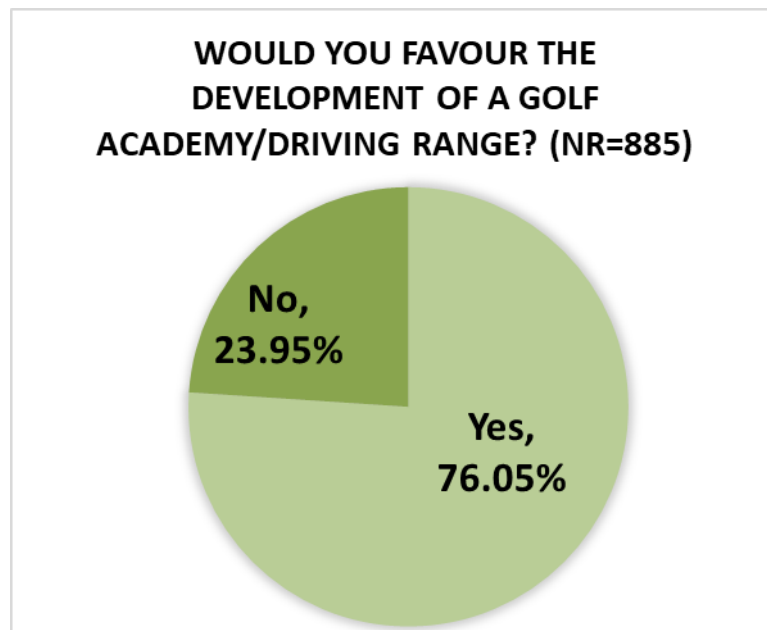


**Chart 24: Overall result of Q20.**

**4.22. Q21. Would you favour the development of a golf academy/driving range?**

4.22.1. There were 885 responses to Q21. A straight forward yes or no option was provided with an overwhelming 76.05% of respondents selecting yes. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide a reason for their response of which there were over 600 comments added .....





**Chart 25: Overall result of Q21.**

**4.23. Q22. Any other comments or suggestions you feel may help us provide you a better service.**

4.23.1. Question 22 asks for other comments to provide a better service. There were almost 500 replies to this question with the majority being negative on more than one issue. Nevertheless, there were also intermittent positive comments. The comments have been collated into the following themes starting with the most frequently commented theme to the least commented theme:

- Booking System/Tee Times
- Improvements
- Management
- Fees
- Play
- Positive
- Practice and other models
- Catering
- Other general comments

**Booking System/Tee Times**

4.23.2. There were over 100 responses or one in five responses had comments about the booking system or tee off times. Three quarters of these responses came from club members. The main issue was not being able to make block bookings. For them this means their club could not play as a club which hampered and slowed play and also affected the clubs after game social activities which is a big part of why they join a golf club. Typical comments received from club members were about:

- wanting reinstatement of block booking times believing the current system stops them from drawing playing partners resulting in visitor or season ticket holders being caught up in slower playing 4 balls playing a competition.
- wanting a strategy focussed on increasing club member numbers with the established clubs as it's difficult now to recruit new members.
- wanting the time between tee times reduced e.g. reinstate 7 minute tee times.
- believing members should get preference for peak playing times i.e. weekends or dedicated time slots.
- believing too many slots are booked out to accommodate visitors.
- believing visitor times should be moved to later in the day.

- wanting courses opened up earlier during summer months. e.g. 5am
- allow early booking based on how long a golfer has been a member – the longer they've been a member the earlier they have access to book a tee time.

4.23.3. Booking tee times was also the most popular issue with non-club members. Typical comments received from non-club members were about:

- believing the system is not fair to season ticket holders paying full price but not enjoying same booking privileges as clubs.
- believing the clubs hog the best times.
- believing the current app does not allow a guest to be registered and needs to include a guest category.
- wanting the time between tee times reduced e.g. back to 7 minute tee times, but also suggested that time between tee times should be based on how many players are in a group.
- believing those who don't turn up are not being penalised.
- having specific tee times during school holidays provided for youngsters.
- restricting the number of times a person can play the same course in a single week.

### **Improvements**

4.23.4. There were nearly 100 comments or nearly one in five comments suggesting improvements encompassing the state of courses and surrounding environment of South Ayrshire's Golf courses. The Troon courses received most criticism. Most improvements were recommended by club members. Some comments are quite emotive with members expressing their embarrassment of the state of some courses. General improvement comments include:

- Be proactive in maintenance rather than reactive.
- Need better practice facilities including extra practice nets and areas for shots from practice bunkers.
- Cut rough to semi-rough and mow heather would save time looking for balls.
- Improve bunkers
- Improve and water greens.
- Better drainage in winter and irrigation in summer.
- Too many divots – operate a sand bottle bank for golfers to pick up and fill divots.
- Too many rabbit holes causing a danger to player safety – cull the rabbits.
- Heavy equipment destroying areas of some courses.
- Clean the hole cups.
- Paint the tee blocks.
- Renew pins and pin flags.
- Improve hole information at all tees for visitors – maybe a source of advertising revenue.
- Identify holes by name giving them an identity.
- Invest and improve the look and feel of courses to enhance the visitor experience.
- Provide more buggies as membership is elderly and more access, i.e. cart paths, for buggies on courses.
- Introduce private enterprise to service golfers e.g. buggies go round courses with food and drink to sell to golfers.
- Improve the walkways.
- Have a starter hut at all first tees to prevent skip-ons.
- Provide toilets or portaloos around all courses.
- Introduce half way house selling rolls, hot and cold drinks in winter.
- Provide drinking water fountains around courses.
- Renew and empty bins more often.
- Tidy up car parks – Install more electric charging points in car parks.
- Repair road access into courses.
- Provide a pool table in clubhouse.
- Don't loop 9 holes on any courses as golfers will find this boring.

## 4.23.5. More specific comments and suggestions to improve individual courses were:

- Belleisle:
  - Improve bunkers, water greens, remove thick grass under trees, sort out areas where there's been GUR for years.
  - Don't change the layout.
  - Base which course visitors should play, either Seafield or Belleisle, on handicap.
  - Have more marshalling to stop people playing for free.
  - Improve or remove the embarrassing toilet at the 9<sup>th</sup> hole.
  - Relocate greenkeepers compound to behind walled garden and use space for car parking.
  - Increase car parking.
  - Repair/improve main access road and cottage at the entrance.
  - Increase club house opening times.
  - Make Belleisle the best municipal course in the UK.
- Dalmilling:
  - Develop other ventures like driving range or foot golf.
  - Develop a golf academy then make Dalmilling a 9 hole course.
- Darley:
  - Fairways and tees need to be seeded.
  - Greens at Troon courses have been very good all season.
  - Tee boxes with numbers need attention.
  - Too many divots left by golfers.
  - Rabbit holes are a health and safety issue.
  - Too much rubbish left on the course.
  - Areas on Darley resemble a battlefield.
  - Almost impossible to find a lie in middle of fairways that are not in a divot.
  - Areas of 're-turf' to combat rabbit holes are not revisited to ensure growth.
  - Improving paths for non golfers a waste of money.
  - Almost no visibility on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> tees.
  - Changes to Darley were not near to what was expected or needed.
  - Changes made on Darley have just been left and not maintained and now looks like a dump.
  - Cut back the banks of the burn on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> holes to see where the water is.
  - 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> holes are a shambles.
  - 9<sup>th</sup> hole has been ruined an absolute disgrace.
  - Bridges have been poorly constructed.
  - Need buggy access.
  - Course is in terrible condition.
  - Close the course it's mess.
  - Heavy tractors and equipment are destroying this and other Troon courses.
  - Condition of Troon courses is falling way short.
  - Condition of work carried out is sub-standard.
  - Ashamed to be a South Ayrshire season ticket holder and St. Meddans club member and the council should be ashamed at the condition of the Troon courses.
  - So disappointed with gradual decline of Troon courses and I and some friends are considering moving to another course.
  - Troon fairways have deteriorated but clubhouse facilities have improved.
  - The three Troon courses are well balanced.
- Fullerton:
  - Reroute 17 and 18 holes would facilitate a driving range and practice area.
- Girvan:
  - Get the clubhouse open again as there's no social side to golf at Girvan.
  - Cut knee high weeds around the clubhouse – it needs a tidy up.
  - Course needs attention to bring it back to the standard it once was.
  - Change starter hours to later to chase non paying chancers away.
  - Girvan has been left without facilities.

- Why is Girvan a field a weeds when Ayr and Troon courses are in good condition?
- Watering and maintaining holes while people are playing sends the wrong message out to players paying.
- Girvan course is a delight to play.
- Lochgreen:
  - Greens at Troon courses have been very good all season.
  - Too many divots left by golfers.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> holes are almost unplayable because of poor drainage.
  - Leave the heather alone.
  - Too many rabbit holes are a danger.
  - Lochgreen was previously used as an Open qualifier and need to get it back to that status.
  - Heavy tractors and equipment are destroying this and other Troon courses.
  - Lochgreen is in terrible condition.
  - Condition of Troon courses is falling way short.
  - So disappointed with gradual decline of Troon courses and I and some friends are considering moving to another course.
  - Troon fairways have deteriorated but clubhouse facilities have improved.
  - The three Troon courses are well balanced.
- Maybole:
  - Improve the greens
  - Need a ranger as people walk on and play for nothing.
  - Close Maybole golf course.
- Seafield:
  - Junior tees are still a long walk.
  - Create a pitch and putt somewhere.
  - Need more marshalling to stop many non-member, non-paying playing goes on in the evenings.
  - Relocate the green keepers compound to behind the walled garden and reuse the area for car parking.
  - Paths need to be raised and extended.
  - More rubber mats required.
  - Some areas that have been GUR for years need to be fixed.
  - Green needs to be watered.
  - Don't change the layout.
  - Base which course visitors should play, either Seafield or Belleisle, on handicap.

## **Management**

4.23.6. There were approximately 90 comments or approximately one in six comments on management of the courses. Issues and ideas on running and managing the courses include:

- Issues:
  - Administration of season ticket purchase was abysmal last year.
  - Increasing membership will lead to further erosion of times available as will any golf course closures.
  - Disbelief the courses run at a loss as they were believed to be breaking even a few years ago and think the cause is poor management;
  - Major decisions made without proper consultation with or agreement from clubs, ticket holders or the public.
  - Making changes for change sake is not always the answer.
  - Believe agendas are being promoted by officials or private working groups.
  - Lack of correspondence and the need for better communication by management with clubs, ticket holders and the public.
  - Listen to golf clubs.
  - Listen direct to members not golf clubs.
  - Respond to concerns, complaints and suggestions quickly.
  - Need to build trust with members as there's a disconnect between stakeholders.
  - Actions taken should be based on feedback received.

- Stop politicians interfering.
  - Don't try to privatise the operation.
  - Need a suitably experienced golf course manager to take forward rather than a council employee.
  - Council needs to give the major clubs across the 8 courses the position they deserve based on membership numbers and their history on promoting junior golf.
  - Very poor decision on booking arrangements to discriminate against fee-paying SAC members in favour of members of affiliated clubs.
- Ideas:
    - Drive engagement and involvement of clubs with any new proposal.
    - Ring fence golf fees just for golf and not used for other budget spends.
    - Focus on increasing club memberships and maybe think about amalgamating clubs;
    - Apply for lotto funding to improve by relating it to promoting healthy lifestyle.
    - Introduce volunteer marshalling to combat slow play and players not paying.
    - Tap into additional revenue streams to invest in local courses.
    - More routine communication on closures, maintenance and repairs etc.
    - Conduct monthly or quarterly meetings with golf councillors, clubs and golfers.
    - Have personnel on a steering group that do not have private, personal or political views.
    - Flexi membership is a useful option but there are similar schemes that offer better choices for players.
    - Get rid of the local authority mindset and manage as a golf club.
    - Invest in clubhouse managers.
    - People will pay for quality courses so invest to make into premier courses to drive up green fees.
    - Move toward an upmarket resort style with full practice facilities, professionals available and after golf facilities and therefore charge more.
    - Build an infrastructure of hotels, courses, competitions and facilities into a business model that employs more local people, expands the local economy and encourages more young people to try the game.
    - Explore opportunities with the private sector and develop a commercial mentality;
    - The cost models and management should view the courses not only as golf courses but as a public park.
    - Compromise between profit, healthy lifestyle and love of the game.
    - Reach out to local businesses to give discounts for golf members.

## **Fees**

4.23.7. There were over 40 comments or about one in 12 comments about fees or the fee structure. The typical comments below show the mixed views golfers have on the topic.

- 50% reduction for guests is too generous.
- Limit the maximum discount to 25%.
- People who live outside South Ayrshire should pay more. If courses are losing money it doesn't make sense for South Ayrshire residents to fund golf for non-residents from other local authorities.
- No concessions for pensioners.
- It's currently expensive to play.
- Increasing fees puts people off playing.
- Increase in fees acceptable if guaranteed a tee time on the weekend.
- Charge more to improve the standard of courses and facilities.
- Fees are less than half of private club so willing to pay more.
- Options for membership to include fewer number of courses to play for those that only play one or two courses or offer individual course membership at reduced rates rather than for all 8 courses.
- Return to Group 1 and 2 courses with lower fees for Group 2.
- Return to old monthly fee system.



- Bring back 8 month membership.
- Look at what other clubs charge, workout income vs expenditure, reset fees and don't run at a loss.
- Apply discounts to direct family members of existing season ticket holders.
- Flexi membership is a great idea.
- Only South Ayrshire residents can be members and all others are visitors who don't get any subsidy benefits.
- Return the monies previously taken as VAT which members have paid over the years.
- Have ability to play only few holes e.g. 6, 9 or 12 holes at reduced cost which will also speed up play.

## **Play**

4.23.8. There were nearly 40 comments or about one in 13 comments about playing the game.

- Need rangers/marshals to speed up slow playing groups at peak times, to stop people playing for free particularly in the evenings, to keep group size to a maximum of four players, and to stop more than one player using a single set of clubs.
- Could the starter also be a golf marshal.
- New golfers need to be shown the etiquette, rules and pace of play.
- Only allow new golfers on easy shorter courses until they reach a certain standard to play longer more difficult courses.
- More thought on placement of tees for non-long hitters.
- Set a handicap limit on 18 on some difficult courses, e.g. Belleisle, to speed up play.
- Have sessions for slow playing golfers when there is no time pressure from faster players.
- Have blue tees closer to holes for young children on courses.
- Redesign score cards to cover all forms of golf scoring.

## **Positive**

4.23.9. There were nearly 40 comments or about 1 in 13 comments having something positive to say about either the state of South Ayrshire golf courses or the way they are being managed.

Typical comments were about:

- clubhouse, ground staff, starters and caterers doing a great job.
- golf offered being good value for money, overall quality of golf offered above other regions, courses are fantastic.
- applause for the step change in forming GSA and the golfing opportunities during the Covid pandemic.
- congratulations for the changes made as golf has become once more accessible to those who are not private club members on the premier courses.
- greens at Troon courses good all season, Girvan course looking good and a delight to play on.
- golf seemingly has a higher priority than previously.
- clubhouses and cafes at Belleisle and Troon are very good.
- BRS email big improvement keeping members informed of bookings.

## **Practice and other models**

4.23.10. There were less than 30 comments or about 1 in 20 comments about practice facilities and other uses or non uses of land. These included comments like:

- create a junior golf club with lessons that don't cost a lot to join.
- get school age kids involved by getting golf on the school curriculum or work with outreach programs to encourage kids to play.
- create a thriving junior programme by having strategic partnerships, sponsorship, fundraising and mechanisms that provide income to be channelled back into South Ayrshire golf to offer something nowhere else can.

- any potential golf academy has to be different with some indoor facilities to ensure it remains open year round, is affordable, available for kids, has a driving range, retail space, state of the art, attractive for investors and make it a one of a kind facility.
- create a driving range and practice areas would be a good to generate income.
- golf simulation facility would attract extra income during winter.
- Dalmling would be a perfect location for other ventures like a golf academy, driving range or footgolf.
- driving range and practice area at Fullerton course by rerouting the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18 holes.
- golf academy in Rozelle.
- create a 2 hole pitch near reindeer park to capture play park audience.
- close two courses and invest in the others that are popular.
- don't attempt to get common good land at the Old Racecourse site.
- the Old Racecourse site is woefully underused.
- no foot golf.

### **Catering**

4.23.11. There were just over 20 comments or about 1 in 25 comments about catering facilities which were typically about:

- Change café opening hours in line with the seasons particularly in summer to capture increased morning and evening visitors and players.
- Lease cafes out to caterers to raise more revenue.
- Increase revenue by allowing clubhouses to provide dinners and drinks by hosting events and entertainment.

### **Other general comments**

4.23.12. There were over 90 comments covering a variety of subjects including:

- Conduct more 1 day and weekend competitions/tournaments with better facilities to create an atmosphere by having e.g. beer tent, food stalls, places to congregate, leader boards.
- Council should stop thinking golfers have to pay for all facilities that are enjoyed by everyone.
- Conflict of interest between staff overseeing booking system on behalf of all members and those who administer the SA Golf Club.
- High level of rubbish and waste on courses.
- SA Golf website is shockingly bad.
- Staff should engage with players and guests and starters need to smile, be friendly, courteous and welcoming as it all makes a big difference.
- Have less dog walkers on courses as there are vast amounts of dog poo on courses.
- People want to know which courses aren't profitable.
- Create a bank of donated old disused golf clubs and supply free of charge for young entrants to the game.
- Better policing/security on courses to help stop equipment getting stolen and courses getting damaged.
- It feels priority is given to non-golfing pedestrian than golfers who are paying a fee.
- Large numbers of outsiders are being given membership who have to travel from afar which can't be good for the environment.
- Long term members have been treated badly in last year because of focus on new members due to covid.
- Youth season ticket holders should be allowed to play Group 1 courses with adult member without a formal handicap.
- More promotion of golf e.g. health benefits of playing golf, golf events, go into schools and promote and be proud of golf in South Ayrshire.
- Encourage single ballers to double up and meet new people thus freeing up more tee times.
- Advertise cafes and services to the public.
- Promote the biodiversity around courses.
- Be aware of or stop misinformation leaking out to local press.

- More signs warning the public of the dangers of flying golf balls.
- Clearer signage of course layouts.
- Signs encouraging players of proper speed of play.

DRAFT