

BLANKNEY GOLF CLUB
MINUTES of the COMMITTEE MEETING
Held on Tuesday 4th April 2023 @ 7pm in the Clubhouse

Present:

Chairman – Lynda Ramscar, **Club Captain** – Nigel Saunders **Ladies President** – Terry McCarthy
Professional – Alec Bradley **Course Manager** - John Hart, **Fixtures Sec** – Kev O’Rourke
Secretary & Treasurer – Richard Tasker, **Vice Capt.** – Simon Smith
~~**House & Social** – Julian Peckham, **Comps Sec** – Paul Sirrell, **Handicap Sec** – John Dempster~~
Junior Organiser – Chris Wood, ~~**Senior’s Captain** – Paul Finley~~
Tim Banks – Blankney Estates

Apologies: Julian Peckham, Paul Finley & Paul Sirrell

Chairman’s Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed Tim Banks (Blankney Estates executive).

Tim Banks from Blankney Estates – Planning for the Future.

Tim explained that he was here to facilitate the discussion on "Planning for the Future". The Executive are keen to point out that Blankney Golf club has been regularly incurring losses every year for the past few years, despite trying to take corrective action. The Executive gave an initial presentation to the Committee on 13th December 2022, which included a number of options for consideration relating to the future structure of the club. One of which was the possibility of the Club becoming a "Members club" again, thereby benefiting from a possible VAT saving on members subs. The potential VAT saving would help increase the income of the club; for example the loss incurred throughout 2022 is stated to be circa £95,000, but the VAT paid on subs was £93,000. The Executive wish to consider all options before the end of December 2023, ready for any changes that are agreed to be implemented at the Subscription year starting on 1st March 2024. The member subscription renewals have been processed throughout March, and it is now clear that 221 members (who are core golfers) have not renewed their membership, which only makes balancing the budgets even harder. Unfortunately the state of the course following the chafer grub and bird damage overwinter has not helped the situation, but it is hoped that this may improve as the Spring weather picks up, and more potential members (including past members) could join or re-join. In the past, it has been the norm to expect some members not to renew their membership for various reasons, but this had usually been offset by new members joining throughout the year and lapsed members re-joining as the Masters tournament gets underway. The Executive are therefore keen to consider any change of structure at the club, whereby any potential tax savings are maximised and future financial risks and potential losses could be shared.

Blankney Estates will seek professional guidance from specialist tax Accountants, along with further discussions with Kevin Fish (a golf club consultant and advisor) ready for further more meaningful discussions at future Committee meetings. Tim Banks (or another member of the Executive) will continue to be invited to all future Committee meetings to continue these discussions. The Committee acknowledge the importance of this issue and will fully engage with the membership at the appropriate time.

Minutes of the last meeting held on 28th February 2023 were agreed and approved.
Proposed by John Dempster and seconded by Chris Wood

Matters arising from the last meeting:

Website Update. – Alec Bradley advised that the new website has now been launched. But not yet fully available to all members, soon to be rectified. Alec to include an update in the next News letter
Clubhouse memorabilia – John Dempster is liaising with Derek Finch.

Starters Gazebo – now delivered and ready for use. Stored in the old BE offices .NS to produce a guide as to its use.

Committee Golf – arranged for Fri 14th April, Kev O'Rourke organising, curry meal to follow, Kev to confirm numbers with Paul G.

Proposed 1904 Golf Society – agreed by Executive to join. Alec B dealing.

Golf Course improvement grant to the Blankney Estates: ongoing discussions to continue.

Committee Car parking spaces: It was agreed individual spaces should be reserved for the Chairman and the Captain only, and all the other spaces(apart from the raffled space) be available to all members on the Committee on a “first come, first served basis”. This would be tried for a period of 3 months. This should lead to more use of the spaces by more Committee members.

Golf Genius software: This will be introduced by 1st May, when the training has been completed by the potential users. Golf Genius will replace the current system used for running the golf comps.

On Course volunteers started with a session today, helping the greens staff with fairway damage repairs. John Hart thanked those who helped, more sessions planned, more volunteers needed.

Correspondence:

Steve Penlington (and friends) have written asking why the temporary greens are not prepared properly. Can they be improved, or the main greens extended to the front, using the front fringes as temp greens. The letter also raised a question about the current frost policy. The Chairman asked John Hart to consider these points and report back in due course.

Terry Bentley has emailed, asking for financial support to subsidise the cost of team clothing, for the A & B Teams who play in the League. After due discussion, it was agreed to cover 50% of the cost of a golf shirt for each new member of the teams, but any new sponsorship needs to be taken into account. Terry also asked if it was possible to cover the cost of food to be offered to visiting teams after League matches. This was discussed but not supported. Refreshments are already provided at the clubs expense for Elsham & Bramley home matches, and this should continue, but any additional cost for home League matches (which would have to include the Ladies League games) was felt to be potentially too expensive.

Steve Lockwood – has emailed a general complaint about how members are wrongly interpreting the recently introduced “Use of mats policy on the fairways”. Members have been confused by the seemingly simple rules of using the mats, Steve Lockwood having witnessed lots of members using mats off the fairways. This was discussed at some length, and it was decided to review the Mats Policy to try to make this fairly simple policy document easier to understand. The original wording had been taken from the WHS website, to try to have a standard approach to this issue, but it obviously needs simplifying. Members must follow the guidelines outlined, it's there to help protect the course which aids recovery.

Committee Secretary/Treasurer Report:

Richard Tasker (Treasurer) provided confirmation that the current bank balances total £8766.02 With only modest expenditure during March. Competitions have now commenced, so Comps levy's have started to accumulate. The 200 club will commence from May, but we can only expect lower income this year from this source due to falling membership numbers. Can all Committee members encourage as many members as possible to join the 200 club? It is a valuable source of funds, and it only costs £10 to join, with the possibility of winning cash prizes!

Course Managers Report:

John Hart confirmed the rainfall for March was 118 mm (and was very welcome). April 1 mm to date. The greens staff had started to cut the grass on the fairways. Tees had been cut, fertilized, and seeded. The warmer weather has helped to germinate the grass seed. The hired seeding machinery was very good in operation, unlike the much larger one from the Estate. The hired machine will be back on the course shortly, to get the fairways seeded where needed. Some holes may have to be closed, temporarily, while the seeding work is in progress. The work done by the volunteers is very welcome, so thanks to all who helped.

Competitions Report

Paul Sirrell was not able to be at the meeting, but had circulated the following report to all Committee members:

- Entry Sheets for the Woodcock Cup & Jack & Eve Cup are displayed on the main notice board, can all sections give them a big push please?
- Golf Genius training received with the intention of going live on 1st May 2023, however, further training is required and has been arranged for Tuesday 11th April for Gail, John and I. We will then make a decision as to when it would be prudent to "Go Live." Having said that, I have entered Mays Competitions onto V1/HDiD, including the 2 Opens.
- Now the Competition season is upon us, early indications show that entries for the competitions so far are similar to those of last year

Fixtures update from Kev O'Rourke - Kev advised that the Prostate Charity day had been cancelled by the organizers. He was busy with some Ladies Comps dates, and had already started to look to get some dates in for 2024, namely the Capt.'s Drive In and Captain's Weekend dates. Simon Smith will confirm and discuss these. The Lefts v. Rights planned for 22nd April will have to be re-scheduled for later in the year, when more Lefties should be available to play.

Professional's Report:

Alec Bradley had previously circulated the Committee with the following report:

- *Website update (The new site went live yesterday, 3/4/23) we are continuing to smooth areas off and finish off over the next few weeks. We thanked Uxello who provided our previous site for many years; our new format and modern layout with members login area is, in my eye's a huge improvement on what we had. It is another positive change and enhances our opportunity to outreach new members/visitors to Blankney. Unlike the website of old we are limiting the number of administrators, this again keeps communications fluid with the membership, myself, Diane, Ollie and Conor have had training from 'fine design' to navigate the site functionality. Please use my manager@blankneygolfclub.co.uk for publication of any content.*

- *Golf Genius – ongoing with more training booked in with the company on April 11th, Paul Sirrell, Gail Powell and John Wood will sit in for another look at the work around of how this works, we are nearly there with this offering to the membership and will again makes things run smoother for all. Always easier when the rep is there holding our hands, a refresher is needed.*
- *Fairways Mats, it seems we've got an issue here so will look at getting a video interpretation out later this week of how and what to do (if I see I understand - may come into play) notices aren't sending this message home far enough. I personally don't agree with scraping and replaying competitions, we have a full diary as it is. Rules of golf are always a grey area, let's move on with better clarity would be my way. If the weather Gods are helpful this may only be a short term measure and we're guided by course manager John Hart.*
- *Paul Guilbert has increased the Bar/clubhouse opening times; which after benchmarking clubs in Lincolnshire, is far and above what they offer. I'm looking at schemes this week (Twilight golf promotions to create another stream of footfall onto the course, then a drink after play) let's use it. Julian & the H & S committee, will also I'm sure have some useful social ideas to possible entertain.*
- *Thank you to Lynda and Nigel who met with myself and John to discuss a members working group to help with visuals, I believe our first group is starting Tuesday, certainly the weather has delayed this. John will vouch how much rain we've had in March, but remember we are only just into April and the course tends to flourish early May into June.*
- *Murray, the Club secretary of Fulwell GC has been contacted with reference to the 1904 club scheme, images of Blankney and a brief history of the club have been sent over for his attention as requested, will keep everyone up to speed when I know more.*
- *My new role at the club will help improve your experience as a member of Blankney, please feel free to lean on me as much as possible with club matters. We are also recruiting another PGA Professional, who will join the small team we already have and will offer tuition and advice within the Pro shop, watch this space.*

Captain's Report

Nigel Saunders advised that the first Club friendly match had taken place at Newark, with ex member Frank Finch now playing for Newark, sinking the winning put to win the match for Newark! Nigel reminded the meeting that all future Committee Meeting Minutes can now be published on the new club's website, under the members section.

Ladies Section Report by Terry McCarthy – Ladies President

The ladies' committee have, reluctantly, cancelled the Open that was to take place on 13th May 2023, due to lack of numbers. Tee times have been released back to the Pro shop.

Ladies Invitation to Gents is this coming Saturday. We have 20 pairs signed up to play, with most players also staying for sandwiches and chips.

King Charles III Coronation competition will be a Texas Scramble but not a shot-gun start as that would take up too many tee times which would be unfair on a bank holiday Monday. Will liaise with Julian and Paul to decide finer details. Gail is happy to help too. Hopefully the club will be able to fund the prizes (just coronation mugs/tankards) and possibly a drink for all competitors. The main idea of this competition was to encourage players into the clubhouse after the game. This was discussed, and it was agreed to charge £10 per team, and the Committee funds will also help towards the prizes, if required.

The total raised by the Car-park space raffle was £235, proceeds split between the Captain's Charity and additional funds to the Ladies Section.

Social Secretary's Report

Julian Peckham was not able to attend the meeting, but had circulated the following report:

Please advise on an acceptable profit margin on specific raffles. As a team we believe 50% will allow us to continue funding events as we have in the past. *Time did not allow a full discussion on this, but the general feeling was that future clubhouse raffles should not have any deducted for fund raising, but raffles at social events could have up to a 50% allowance perhaps. More discussion is needed here to clarify all the finer points.*

We have several dates from Paul on which we will be organising different functions. Dates for your diaries to follow shortly. Including our yearly H&S meeting all welcome to attend.

Coronation Cup. Please advise if any assistance is needed. Please discuss catering requirements, funding and advertising. *(This was discussed, with the Ladies section taking the arrangements in hand)*

Further suggestions:

The clubhouse is currently open from 0900hrs to 2000hrs for a trial period only. I believe if it is not used it will close early all year round. The staff have the autonomy to stay open longer if the clubhouse is busy. Players could be encouraged to let staff know they are calling in for a pint after a later round of golf.

Could it be possible to book evening tee times for just 5 or 6 holes? Taking it in turns to tee off on the holes you meet players on that have played the longer course? Provide a picnic bench for waiting players to sit on.

TEA TIME TEES with a pint and a light bite in the clubhouse afterwards. The idea of the light bite is so we could offer a limited food service run by the bar staff, with no need to staff a full kitchen or waitress service. (Coffee shop type service). Prior notice could be given.

If this works we may be able to offer a discounted Tea Time membership in the future. Attracting younger working players.

Generally with the retirement age increasing and no more final salary early retirements we may see a temporary drop in people retiring from work and joining the bigger golf courses.

The Tea Time option may also be an attraction to the senior players who may prefer to play a shorter round. The provision of the shorter round may have the ability to cater for trollies and limited use of buggies, more easily in the winter. This could increase our acquisition and retention of members.

Club house notice board as you come off the 18th. Reminding members we are open and including any events and special offers.

Friday night pint after work. A tea time pint on a Friday night initiative is slowly picking up more customers. Great to see several ladies there 2 weeks ago.

Time did not allow a discussion on the above suggestions, so they can be discussed at the annual H & S meeting, to be held shortly.

Seniors' Captain

Paul Finley gave his apologies for not attending, and did report the following: The result of the Seniors Match Held today at Spalding. Blankney were the unfortunate losers 5.5 to 2.5. It was a close thing except for one result which was 8-7 win for our boys. The Spalding course was very good for this time of year, and all the Blankney Team enjoyed their visit.

Handicaps Secretary

John Dempster advised he was coming to terms with the handicap system. He was in the process of dealing with the casual play cards submitted for handicap purposes from last year, bearing in mind most were played on a non-qualifying course basis, due to winter tees being used, away from the main tees. JD was seeking clarification from WHS.

Juniors Update:

Chris Woods provided the following report:

- Junior Organiser has completed the DBS checks just waiting for final confirmation
- CW has the new list of Junior Members - bit more info required on contacts but then will setup WhatsApp group etc.
- We will renew our Golf Foundation membership (Level 1) and lean on them for support moving forward with activities and recruitment plans etc. (good local resource) this will also tie into Olly and his progression (School etc.)
- We are planning a Junior "open range session" on the afternoon of the 29th April to see how many we can get ,we`ll do some putting comps etc. depending on who shows. (text will be in this week`s Newsletter)
- CW formulating a questionnaire to send out in the Newsletter to try and gain some more insight into what expectations or "wants" that Parents and Juniors would like to see.

Any Other Business:

- England Golf have provided details of their training courses; some of which could be suitable for Committee members. Could all Committee members please have a look and see if there is anything relevant to their roles on the Committee. They are free, and are offered by a video link. A sheet providing details was circulated to all, providing the web-link to click on.
- The Chairman was advised that our Welfare Officer is Simon Tindell, and that he should be invited to attend Committee meetings, perhaps every quarter. Kev O'Rourke is to advise the Chairman of his contact details.
- The new Draft Rule book produced by Lizzie Taylor from Blankney Estates, had been previously circulated to the Committee, asking for comments. However, time constraints meant that it could not be discussed in full. Various written amendments have been suggested, and these will be passed onto Lizzie Taylor; but it still leaves a number of issues that need discussing at the next Committee meeting.

The Chairman closed the meeting at approx. 9.12pm

Date of Next meeting: Tuesday 2nd May 2023

v. 11.04.23