

# West Herts Golf Club

## JCC Briefing Paper

### Purpose

The Board of West Herts Golf Club ("WHGC") is concerned about the sustained decline in the number of Watford residents who play the course as visitors. The visitor numbers have fallen from a high of 3000+ to a low in 2013 of 1041.

Like many other amateur sports in England, golf faces some serious challenges. As a result of a combination of circumstances - a challenging economy, lifestyle changes and a shifting competition and consumer landscape - the number of golf club members has declined by 30% since 2004, down from 884,000 to 675,000.

### Recommendations

The Board accepts the research conclusions of both Sport England and England Golf that available leisure time and cost are two of the major factors limiting the growth in sport participation. The Board would like to introduce a number of new initiatives which the Board feels will benefit Watford residents and increase the numbers of residents and other casual golfers visiting and making use of the golf course and clubhouse facilities:

- Greater access by increasing the amount of shared access time and reducing allocated times.
- Improved access by providing booking facilities by phone and via the club web site.
- Reduced green fee rates at quieter times, with discounts up to 50%. The JCC will continue to set and review base rates and discounts will be administered by the club based on weather conditions, competitor analysis and seasonal demand.
- Launch of a flexible lifestyle membership, which is a hybrid of membership and green fee and appeals to the casual social golfer. Target date: April 2015
- Joint WHBC and WBC pre-season marketing campaign promoting visitor green fees.

These initiatives are targeted to increase the number of visitors who are Watford residents from 1041 to 1600 over two years. This increases the average daily demand from 3 to 4.5.

In order to implement these initiatives it will be necessary to agree to some changes to some of the clauses in the Joint User Agreement - or to their suspension during a pilot period of one year commencing 01.01.15 to prove the benefit case. The details of how this might be implemented are illustrated in the attached Appendix 1.

### Conclusion

West Herts will be celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, a landmark few organisations - let alone golf clubs - have achieved. A long history is no guarantee of a long future. It is the capacity, willingness and flexibility to adapt to a changing commercial landscape that secures the future of any organisation.

The Board is committed to building a strong business partnership with the Council that will enable Watford residents - whether as members or visitors - to enjoy the golf course and clubhouse facilities of one of the premier golf clubs in the county.

The WHGC Board hope that the JCC will give favourable consideration to the proposals contained in this briefing paper and look forward to the committee's response.