

To Claire Monaghan  
South Ayrshire Council

From Norman McLean  
Chairman  
Friends of Belleisle

Proposed Golf Academy for AGT at Seafield Golf Course and the Old Racecourse, Ayr.  
Meeting of the Leadership Panel Tuesday 17 September.

In representing Friends of Belleisle, I am astonished to find that not one item in the previous submission has been altered or adjusted in light of the overwhelming objections received to development on the Old Racecourse playing fields and open space owned by Ayr Common Good Fund. Others have highlighted this, yet again, to you in separate correspondence. This intention to develop, what is essentially a vanity project, must not be sanctioned by the Leadership Panel. A concerted legal effort by ratepayers will be assembled to safeguard the townspeople's interest at the Sheriff Court hearing should this be necessary.

Regarding the validity of the Business Plan submitted to the Panel, this is little more than a Driving Range with two or three practice areas replicating similar facilities at Turnberry, Roodlea and North Gailes, all within the same catchment area. They are all supported by additional revenue earning activities of mixed financial success. This type of business, for that is what it is, is not financially viable on a stand alone basis and will therefore be unable to sustain itself. It will thus need outside support to survive. South Ayrshire Council cannot be the bank of last resort.

Within the Business Plan the costs have been redacted and we will be challenging this action through the Freedom of Information legislation. What is available is certainly challenged. The statistical data is, in the main, five years out of date and during this time golf nationally has seen a very significant decline. This proposal does not address this decline and is indeed going against the local authorities' direction in Scotland in closing uneconomic public golf courses. ie. Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. The unredacted information in the Business Plan suggests income in the first year of £143,000, the main source being a £100 annual subscription plus charging for golf ball use. There is no such subscription by the others, even at Turnberry, so the main source of income will simply not transpire. Would golfers pay for a facility that is available free from its competitors? The uptake of this membership will be at an absolute minimum at best and cannot possibly achieve the projection. This project, using other people's funding, is fraught with uncertain assumptions which do not take into account items like overshooting development costs and income below target which in this day and age are most likely to occur.

If this happens then South Ayrshire Council will be left with the remnants to pick up and re-instatement of the Seafield golf course. This will inevitably lead to the closure as the only viable option. This project must not be allowed to proceed. It is not needed, is not properly costed and will disrupt Common Good Land which at the present time is put to good public use by our younger generation.

It is the duty of the Leadership Panel to view the overall effect of this pending decision on the ratepayers and electorate of this area and reject this proposal.