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Dear Councillors,

I am writing to update you on guidance provided to our committee by our members at our recent Extraordinary General Meeting and our reaction to the views expressed by members of the public at the recent Community Engagement Events.

Introduction

Our aim is to build on and develop the legacy provided by Mr C J C Douglas in 1906 when he gifted the land occupied by Douglas Park to Largs Town Council for a public park. It comprised of the former Spring Gardens at Irvine Road and the hill section of Haylie Estate. The park proved to be a great success both for its sport and formal gardens and the hillside rising to 600 feet. In 1920, four tennis courts were laid out in the south of the park. Three years later another three courts were built to the south of the existing courts on land sold to the council for a nominal sum by Mr Douglas.

Our proposal to develop presents an opportunity to completely transform the Douglas Park Tennis Courts into an asset which will be available to the entire community for many years to come and provide wider community benefit on a sustainable and long-term basis.

Extraordinary General Meeting-5TH December 2022

We called an EGM in line with our Constitution with the express purpose of asking members to vote on our proposal to move to Douglas Park.

The results are that 100% of members voting in a quorate EGM voted in support of our proposal to develop the seven courts at Douglas Park.



We have listened to our members and to members of the public who attended the recent Community Engagement events.

Consequently, the key elements of our proposals are set out below.

Long Term Sustainability

The Tennis Courts at Douglas Park have fallen into disrepair due to a lack of maintenance over a number of years. Indeed, the present condition of the courts detracts from the high standards set by the outstanding work of the Douglas Park Project. They have set a high bar. However, we see no point in looking backwards by examining why this has happened. We prefer to focus on how our proposals will generate initial and on-going investment to avoid this ever happening again.

We will never allow Douglas Park Tennis Courts to fall into disrepair again.

We can say this because our Financial Model is based upon the creation of a 10 year Sinking Fund into which we will contribute funds to enable improvements and replacements to take place which will ensure the long-term viability of the tennis courts. In addition, through a fully funded maintenance programme we will set and hopefully exceed the standards set by the Douglas Park Project. This will guarantee the tennis courts long-term sustainability.

How we will fund our Proposals

The Club has always aspired to return to Douglas Park, and the announcement of the LTA's Parks Renovation Fund in early 2021, an opportunity presented itself to make this move a reality. This fund aims to regenerate tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition for the benefit of the local community an objective tailor-made for the Douglas Park Tennis Courts. Since then, we have been in discussions with the LTA, Tennis Scotland, Tennis Ayrshire and the Council, as well as other Stakeholders. The LTA has confirmed to us that they would support the development of four courts at Douglas Park as our first stage of development. This would involve carrying out the work themselves on behalf of the Council, and for Largs Tennis Club to secure additional funding to install floodlights and an artificial grass carpet using approximately £30,000 of our own funds and also secure £30,000 from the Community Ownership Fund. Discussions with the LTA have reached a mature stage and the only stumbling block has been the allocation of courts by the Council, and then the court process associated with the Common Good Fund. We are confident that should the Council offer us the space at Douglas Park then things can progress in early 2023. We know also that the LTA have been in discussions with the Council and have reaffirmed this.



The Largs Tennis Club have a sinking fund of £30k which we would look to use to obtain additional match funding of £30k to fund floodlights. We project annual income of £18k from membership fees, public pay and play and coaching, with annual expenditure of £14k, leaving an estimated annual excess (including contingency) of £4k to be used for community development

A summary of the figures referred to above is shown in the table below

Finance (£)	Source
18,000	Largs Tennis Club Membership Fees
4,000	Excess after annual expenditure of £14,000 from Membership Fees
30,000	Largs Tennis Club existing resources
30,000	Funding from Community Ownership Fund

How players can access the Courts

There are a number of ways in which the local community can use the courts.

Firstly, a season pass can be purchased which enables players to play all year round. Secondly there is the 'pay and play' approach whereby players can choose to play on a specific date and time. We will also provide free one-hour sessions as well as coaching under the auspices of the Tennis for Free Initiative ensuring free tennis is primarily targeted at those most in need in the community. These sessions can feature members as well as non-members and is the perfect environment for members to welcome potential new members. A gate access system will be installed to provide a complete court booking solution, this system uses the internet to identify correct pin code access.

Community Involvement

At present we work with and interact with the community by

- Mini Tennis Red 4 to 8 years - played on small courts with short rackets and sponge balls or felt balls enabling players to learn different shots and start to rally.
- Mini Tennis Orange & Green 9 to 11 years - Courts are bigger and wider than the red stage allowing players to develop a range of techniques and tactics before moving on to the next level.
- Junior Tennis - 12 to 16 years. Played on a full-sized court with yellow compression balls. Players learn to develop basic technique, how to build rallies and learn about match play.
- Orange & Green Tennis 9 to 11 years -; Junior Tennis 12 to 16 years -; Adult Beginner 17+ years; Adult Improver 17+ years



- Coaching for adult beginners, those at an intermediate and improver levels in groups or on a one-to-one basis.

We will enhance these initiatives by holding Family Open Days and Open Days for residents of the area surrounding the tennis courts.

On-going management of the Tennis Courts

Another key message which came across from members of the public who attended the Recent Community Engagement events was one of wanting to be consulted as the development of the Tennis Courts progresses and the ongoing management of the courts. We strongly feel that in order to sustain and develop the legacy provided by Mr C J C Douglas there is a requirement to establish dynamic methods which will empower local residents, current users of Douglas Park, our members and the community in general to drive and direct how we run the tennis courts are run. To this end we will establish a Liaison Group. One of the first tasks of the Liaison Group will be to help write a Charter which spells out the powers, duties, structures and constitution of Largs Tennis Club.

We will invite local residents, other Douglas Park users, representatives of the Community Council and North Ayrshire Council to be members of this Liaison Group. Their role will encompass, membership matters, access to courts and crucially ensure that the views of local people are considered in all aspects of the running of the tennis courts. The role of this group will be particularly important during the construction of the new courts.

Within the club we have professional business, project, commercial and financial managers to oversee this project.

A key element of how we will manage the Douglas Park Tennis Courts is through adherence to the following policies.

- LTC Constitution
- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy
- Code of Practice for Young People
- Code of Practice for Parents and Guardians
- Code of Practice for Coaches
- Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Policy Statement
- Guidance on using changing rooms and toilets in public area venues
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Staying Safe Online
- Photography and Filming Best Practice Guide



Environmental Sustainability

Members of the public were keen to know about the environmental impact of our proposals. As part of the development and running of the Douglas Park Tennis Courts we will ensure that minimal environmental impact is a major focus for the Liaison Group through the creation of an Environmental Plan. The key features of this plan will include the following

- Investigate the use LED floodlighting whose advantages include energy efficiency, lower costs, longer lifespan and reduced light pollution and heat emissions
- As part of the feedback from the Community Engagement sessions car parking has been identified as an issue. As part of the examination of the possible solutions we will support the Installation of EV car charging points which are a benefit to the users of Dougals Park as well as attracting local drivers to the club & supporting the local community. EV charging points can also be financially self-sustaining for a relatively small upfront investment.
- 40% of plastic produced is single-use. One person uses an average of 150 plastic bottles a year! We will consider installing a drinking fountain
- Recycle Tennis Balls –We will examine the results of an investigation by the Lawn Tennis Association into methods of recycling tennis balls
- Sustainable travel – We will encourage sustainable travel and identify to membership and guests how they can look at alternative sources of travel to the club. We will promote the use of local transport links e.g., the Local Largs Bus route which has a stop in nearby Bankhouse Avenue. We will also encourage walking and cycling Douglas Park and car-sharing to and from local matches.

Support for North Ayrshire Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy

It is clear that the activities of other organisations interested in using the Douglas Park Tennis courts for activities other than tennis also promote health and wellbeing.

Our proposal to provide wider access to playing tennis adds to the significant evidence base for the range of individual and wider social health and well-being benefits that can be achieved through outdoor activity. Key benefits include: better physical and mental health and guarding against future illness; therapeutic and restorative qualities which enhance recovery; reduced social isolation, greater community cohesion and opportunities to establish lifelong healthy behaviours.

Green health activities include any activity that gets people outdoors and benefits their physical and/or mental health. It can include a wide range of activities and benefits such as:

- Walking and running
- Outdoor learning and play
- Recreation and sport
- A full body workout.



- Reducing the risk of a heart attack
- Improvements in stamina
- Increased muscle toning
- Weight loss
- Improved agility

Conclusion

Our work to date, including consultations with funding bodies and other stakeholders has resulted in detailed and costed plans to overcome the challenges associated with regenerating the Douglas Park Tennis Courts for the benefit of Largs and the surrounding area. We have even sought to compromise by engaging with other community groups interested in using the land. It is clear however, that Largs Tennis Club is in a unique position to bring significant investment to Largs and re-instate a valuable asset which can be used all year round for the benefit of Largs as well as visitors to the area.

We have tried to set out above why we feel we are best placed to develop the Tennis Courts. All we ask of you is to, through your approval of our plans, provide the spark which will ignite our ambitions.

By approving our proposals, you have the opportunity of guaranteeing the availability of tennis in Largs for the foreseeable future.

We will deliver on our proposal

Yours Sincerely

Barnaby Cowin
Secretary
Largs tennis Club