



HOWARD SWAN AND NIKI HUNTER:

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE?

Howard Swan, golf course architect and Niki Hunter, Secretary/Manager from Letchworth GC will present a session at the National Conference 2013, on developing facilities suitable for the future use of the course including a landfill project.

Secretary At Work: April 2013

National Conference at Hinckley Island Hotel in Leicestershire on November 11-13, 2013

A Blueprint for the future.... growing the game..... and getting more value from it?

Would you like to add value to your club membership?

Can you develop the facilities on offer?

After a morning of workshop sessions on Tuesday, 12th November, the plenary hour before lunch will focus on ways to develop the facilities on the course, illustrating this with plans for a landfill development in Hertfordshire. This joint session from Howard Swan, golf course architect, and Niki Hunter, Secretary/Manager of Letchworth Golf Club, Hertfordshire, will tackle some of the issues and illustrate how one club is on its journey to create a legacy for the Club.

Howard Swan

Howard Swan is one of Europe's most senior professional golf course architects, having worked in the golf industry for 40 years in over 20 countries, and has been responsible for over 400 projects, initially with his father, Alex ... now with his son, William. He is a Past President of the Institute of the British Institute of Golf Course Architects and the Chairman of the Golf Consultants' Association.



Presently he is engaged with some 40 courses at home and abroad focussing on their restoration and renovation, working closely with Golf Club Managers, Greenkeepers and Club officers to bring courses up to date and to set their design and performance into long term planning programmes and strategies for the future to meet playing expectations and financial performance.

He is particularly passionate, through his FirstGolf initiative, in seeing facilities created so that more can join the game and grow it at grass roots level. He works extensively at home and abroad to lay out short, compact facilities for children and families to promote the multigenerational opportunity for golf in advance of its re-entry to the Olympics in 2016. In doing this, he is appointed at many members' and proprietary clubs and courses to redesign existing practice facilities and to create multifunctional areas to intensify their use ... and profitability ... and the opportunity to bring more to the game. He has been contributing to conferences, and education and training programmes on golf course design and development internationally as well as at home for England Golf, GTC, BIGGA and FEGGA over the last 25 years, including seminars on restoration and renovation for the regions of GCMA.

A snapshot of Howard's forthcoming conference speech...

Last year was an Olympic year, and we had a wonderful summer both at the games themselves and at the Paralympics. We, as a nation, were very proud of the way we planned and organised it. Yes, it was wonderfully stimulating, wonderfully aspirational and wonderfully inspiring.

But there was no golf and how appropriate it would have been for the United Kingdom, as the origin of the game, to have been host to the inclusion of the first golf competition since Paris in 1904. But in 2016 in Rio, we will see the game reintroduced, I can but hope successfully. Golf needs to come out of the Games with the right image and regard of the world.

That has been questioned markedly in our press. It was only recently that the Chief sports correspondent of *The Times*, Matthew Syed, wrote the following words, when particular referring to the discrimination against women in the game:

“the point of the Olympic Games is inclusivity ... all nations, all races, all creeds, all shapes, all sizes, both genders”

“In London 2012 every country included female athletes for the first time. They are doing better than some of the leading institutions in golf”

“... unacceptable in an Olympic sport ... against the principles of the Olympic Games ... golf feels that it is perfectly entitled to take an immoral stance ...now that the sport has Olympic status it has Olympic responsibilities “

“The game needs to change its face, change its image, change its attitudes from within ... and change the world's perception of it ...”

Yes, we need to change this game of ours, to reach out to communities throughout the world, no matter how poor, no matter how racially founded, without sexual discrimination and without discrimination towards those disadvantaged in any way. We need to become much more socially inclusive as a game. We need to aspire to those Olympic ideals and create that Olympic legacy.

We need programmes, we need initiatives to do that. I believe that the game from within, and each and every level, needs to change attitude towards how we are able to move forward and grow it and it become a game for all as the International Olympic Committee now say it is.

As a golf course architect, for me that means providing facilities that can achieve those objectives. As Tom Simpson, wonderful golf course architect as he was and hardly celebrated enough perhaps unlike his contemporaries of MacKenzie and Colt, said so succinctly that simplicity was the essence of good golf course design'

less is ... undoubtedly ... more

more is ... arguably ... less

big is ... not necessarily ... better

small may ... just be ... beautiful

In my book that means that we should not be designing golf courses which are massively long, massively difficult, massively elaborate, massively expensive ... so-called championship, so-called signature golf courses, whatever that might mean.

We should be designing compact courses, courses which can easily be fitted into small acreages, which take short time to play. They should be designed and built cheaply and economically, yet properly, without over elaboration and the like.

This game of ours needs to be economically and financially sustainable, and combine this with creating social advantage and opportunity and we might have it just made as a game for all ...

Niki Hunter

Niki Hunter - Letchworth Golf Club Secretary/Manager and Chilterns and Home Counties' Regional Captain. Niki writes:

Having started a career in International banking (after decimalisation!) and moved to the corporate world of IBM, a career change to golf club management came about 8 years ago. Starting as the Assistant Secretary in 2005, I was promoted to the Secretary role in 2007. Over the past 6 years the challenges golf clubs face have become well documented and my business controls, finance and administration background have served me well. I have built up the Club's reputation, ably assisted by the Course Manager, created a coherent management team and led the charge on marketing initiatives to encourage membership specifically Junior and Ladies Membership.



A snapshot of Niki's forthcoming conference speech...

Like many Golf Clubs we have a parcel of land that is uninspiring. We have landscaped this to create a short par three course - featureless, but a 'nice to have' practice facility. Time consuming and costly to administer, it is just calling out for attention.

Soil importation, landfill. A concept that fills the membership and neighbours with dread! And the planners and newspapers are rubbing their hand in anticipation of a good fight!

Three years ago Letchworth Golf Club, a private members club in north Hertfordshire, embarked on a project to redevelop this land: to create a legacy for the Club and a facility for members and local residents.

Our journey has only just begun. Social and economic trends have been against use, however, the diggers are about to move in and the dream become a reality. This is nothing new. Plenty of Clubs have done this. Plenty of Clubs are in negotiation to do this. I'm in the middle maelstrom. I'd like to share by experiences, the bidding and planning processes, the visions of sustainability of the club and course from that perspective – half way through and half way to go!

This is an opportunity too good to miss if managed, planned, communicated and sold to everyone. It is an interesting, exciting and at times exasperating journey for any club to embark upon. Together with Howard - he will develop the land - I will develop a credible business and action plan to help give you some insight into the crazy world of tonnage, tip rates, compaction, Gant charts ... and tree trucks !

[This document is prepared for guidance and is accurate at the date of publication only. We will not accept any liability (in negligence or otherwise) arising from any member or third party acting, or refraining from acting, on the information contained in this document.]

