

## Questions for Wirral West Constituency Committee 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018

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### 1. Question - Email from Christina H

Q. There is a concern that this golf course is a waste of money and building on green belt land will set a precedent for the future. Would it not be more beneficial, financially and environmentally to have a wetland centre which would include a visitor centre and cafe? Not only would it be a valuable place to show and engage the next generation in the importance of green spaces. But it would also bring in visitors from outside the area. Golf has been declining in popularity. All around the country golf courses are getting redeveloped with housing. And I would hate to see that happen in Hoylake. We are slowly eating away at what makes Wirral beautiful, if we build on green belt land.

#### Response – David Ball

*The Council is pursuing a project that provides the best return for Wirral across a number of indicators. That is not to say that other schemes, such as the wildlife / wetlands resort, do not have some merit in principle; it is just that no other scheme measures against the golf resort in terms of positive impact. The developer will commission an in-depth study of all the economic benefits of the resort in support of their planning application.*

*The Council is very willing to engage with all stakeholders and have recently held a meeting with Hoylake Village Life to discuss the feasibility of the proposals for an eco-golf resort including a wildfowl and wetland centre. This meeting included representatives from the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, the Golf Environment Organisation and “Stop the Hoylake Golf Resort” Group.*

*We are currently trying to set up a meeting with various statutory organisations to discuss further and can report back in due course.*

Q. It says 175 permanent jobs. Of these how many is actual full time and how many are only part time vacancies? Part time jobs are needed but these would inflate the number of jobs created, to make it seem more worthwhile than it actually is

#### Response – David Ball

*The figure quoted is an estimated number of permanent jobs to be created. The actual number and breakdown between full and part time cannot be confirmed at this stage in the*

*process. For information, it was also estimated that the project will generate 168 construction jobs and many more jobs in the wider supply chain. Further information on the benefits to Wirral's economy will be forthcoming as part of the justification required to satisfy planning requirements.*

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## **2. Questions – Email from Lynsey Williams**

Q. As the council are freezing non-essential spending does that include the proposed Hoylake Golf Resort?

Response – David Ball

*The Hoylake Golf Resort is being pursued as a flagship economic and major tourist attraction which will generate revenue for the Council to re-invest into frontline service provision.*

Q. Will the council take notice of the thousands of signatures and objections to the proposed golf resort or will they just ignore the people and carry on regardless?

Response – David Ball

*The Council will take every view into account and ensure that further formal and informal consultation will capture and record all views.*

Q. We all know the budgets are being cut and councils need to find a way to bring money in but at what cost to our area? Instead of an exclusive housing estate and golf resort the council should be encouraging families to visit the area...they are more likely to use our shops and beaches and bring in continued revenue.

Response – David Ball

*This is precisely what the Hoylake Golf Resort represents; an inclusive, open to all, resort that is much more than a destination for golf based tourism. The operation of hotel will target a wider number of visitors including families, couples and business users as part of a sustainable business model.*

Q. Why are the council not looking at options like Hoylake Visions Eco golf course and wetlands? This would appeal to a much broader selection of people than just a golf resort.

Response – David Ball

*Note: question answered previously (Q.1 Christina H) - The Council is pursuing a project that provides the best return for Wirral across a number of indicators. That is not to say that*

*other schemes, such as the wildlife / wetlands resort, do not have some merit in principle; it is just that no other scheme measures against the golf resort in terms of positive impact. The developer will commission an in-depth study of all the economic benefits of the resort in support of their planning application.*

*The Council is very willing to engage with all stakeholders and have recently held a meeting with Hoylake Village Life to discuss the feasibility of the proposals for an eco-golf resort including a wildfowl and wetland centre. This meeting included representatives from the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, the Golf Environment Organisation and “Stop the Hoylake Golf Resort” Group.*

*We are currently trying to set up a meeting with various statutory organisations to discuss further and can report back in due course.*

- Q. Why are the council not doing more to clear the beaches at Hoylake and West Kirby? Again this will attract a much broader group of people than Golf and so improve footfall in our towns.

Response – David Ball

*The beaches at Hoylake and West Kirby are major assets to Wirral as is the entire coastline and countryside. They will be firmly part of the attraction offered by the hotel particularly for non-golf related visitors.*

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### 3. Question – Email from Viv Gaskin

- Q. Would it not be more appropriate to spend the money on regenerating New Ferry after the devastating explosion? I realise this would not have the same impact as the vanity project which is the Golf Course, providing yet more executive homes in an area which already has its fair share. An appalling use of council money which would be better spent providing homes for the genuinely needy or indeed first time buyers.

Response – David Ball

*The Council are making progress across a number of fronts including that of New Ferry. The Hoylake Golf Resort is a commercial investment that will provide a return on investment and generate revenue year on year for re-investment into frontline service provision. It is not a question of project prioritisation but making progress on a number of regeneration projects. The Council has spent approximately £400,000 on New Ferry in the recovery phase and Homes England have just announced funding of £100,000 for a feasibility study into*

*residential development in the area. The Council is also continuing to press Government for funding to support New Ferry businesses.*

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#### 4. Question – Email from Neil Parry

Q. What are the other options that have been referred to by the Council in concluding that the Hoylake Golf Resort is the “Best value” and what measures of best value were used?

#### Response – David Ball

*At the time of writing no other project can equal or exceed the following estimated outputs (or measures of value);*

*Annual Council Tax income (on completion) £603,000pa*

*Annual Business Rates (on completion) £334,000pa*

*Minimum loan interest return on investment £2.5m*

*Loan arrangement fee £250,000*

*Payment for Council consultant fees and site investigation costs £550,000*

*Minimum premium sale of land receipt (subject to final design) £3m*

*Overage provisions on operational profits*

*175 jobs and 168 construction jobs*

*Estimated savings on operation of municipal course £79,000*

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#### 5. Questions – Email from Keren O’Rourke

Q. In a recent Freedom of Information request the Council were asked to provide a copy of the letter requesting funding for the RSPB's proposals for the restoration of Gilroy Scrape. Confusingly, they provided a copy of a letter requesting funding for a feasibility study into Hoylake Village Life's eco golf resort / wildfowl and wetland centre proposals. Please will the Council now confirm if the land containing Gilroy Scrape is now to be part of the Hoylake Golf Resort, if they see the restoration of Gilroy Scrape as part of the environmental mitigation for the Golf Resort and can you update us on the progress of the negotiations with the landowner of Gilroy Scrape regarding the RSPB's proposals. Can you confirm if the Council have actually tried to source funding for the restoration of Gilroy Scrape?

### Response – David Ball

*The Gilroy scrape lies outside the Hoylake golf resort project boundary but as evidenced by the fact that the Hoylake Langfields potential local wildlife site takes in both the scrape and part of the golf resort, the assessments which will have to be prepared by the golf resort developer may (subject to scoping) potentially need to consider ecological, drainage and other impacts on surrounding land, including the scrape.*

*In practical terms the future of the Gilroy scrape is best considered in the wider context of the golf resort project given that it is now at the pre-application stage. The land itself is in private ownership which is a major complication but should the golf resort be granted planning permission and the project implemented any earlier interventions at Gilroy scrape could become redundant. Therefore the Council have not specifically sought funding for the Gilroy scrape as a standalone project.*

*As stated above the protection of habitats in this location will most likely arise out of the planning application for the golf resort and or progress of the wildfowl and wetland centre. There are too many factors in play to give any degree of certainty as to the way forward.*

*In the meantime the Hoylake Langfields site remains as an 'alert site' or potential local wildlife site and it is shown as such on the Council's hazards system and any planning application within the boundary will trigger a consultation to Wirral Wildlife.*

Q. Please can you provide an update on the Council's discussions with Hoylake Village Life and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust and other partners regarding HVL's proposals for an eco-golf resort / wildfowl and wetland centre?

### Response - David Ball

*There will be a meeting, to be scheduled, with Hoylake Village Life in the near future where an update will be provided regarding HVL's proposals*

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## 6. Question – Email from C J Smith

Q. In the report to cabinet of 4th June, Councillor Phil Davies stated the new Local Plan for housing should "recognise the importance of protecting areas of Green Belt which contribute most to the quality of life we enjoy in Wirral". Please could you clarify if the Council now consider that some areas of Green Belt contribute less to our quality of life? Are the areas of Green belt which they may consider making a lesser contribution, now being considered for housing developments?"

Response – David Ball

*The Council consulted on a Green Belt Review methodology last year and this, along with other land use issues will be reported to Cabinet in July 2018.*

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7. Question – Email from K Barnes

Q. In a report to Cabinet in December 2016, it was stated that the Hoylake Golf Resort detailed design studies and statutory and public consultation would commence in February 2018. Please can you confirm if the studies have commenced and if not, please can you explain why there has been a delay?

Response – David Ball

*The studies have not commenced in terms of actual fieldwork and surveys.*

*The timetable reported in December 2016 was an estimate which has clearly slipped. In the intervening period the project has proven to be more complex than expected and although delayed the project remains live and is moving forward.*

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8. Question – Email from Lily Clough

Q. Leader of the council Phil Davies listed both protecting the greenbelt and progressing the Hoylake Golf Resort as amongst the five priorities that the council has. This week, in regard to the consultation for the Local Plan he said, "making greenbelt land available for development is our absolute last resort". Do Councillors in Wirral West not think that both proposing to build luxury homes (on greenbelt land!) to enhance the viability of the Golf Resort AND protecting the greenbelt are absolutely mutually exclusive objectives and that it would be a further waste of council tax payers money to spend any more on this scheme rather than looking at available alternative ideas?

Response – David Ball

No official response received as yet, question received 13.06.18

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9. Question – Email from Unknown

Q. At the Hoylake Golf Resort Public Meeting in December 2017, Councillor Phil Davies promised to look into Hoylake Village Life's proposal for an eco-golf resort and wildfowl and wetland centre. Please can you give an update and confirm if the Council are undertaking serious discussions about the wildfowl and wetland centre.

Response – David Ball

*Note: question answered previously (Q.5.2 Keren O'Rourke) - There will be a meeting, to be scheduled, with Hoylake Village Life in the near future where an update will be provided regarding HVL's proposals*

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