



## **Case study - Creating a sustainable programme through the North Lanarkshire Golf Development Group**

### **The Challenge**

Golf development started in 2002 with an initial pilot in primary schools. At the time there was no coordinated junior activity at the authority's two municipal golf courses.

Due to the pilot's success North Lanarkshire saw the opportunity for introducing a formalized long term golf development programme.

### **The Solution**

To involve the whole community in making golf accessible to every child, North Lanarkshire Leisure held a consultation meeting in 2005. They invited local golf clubs, the health board, the police and the education department.

"Golf is obviously the main driver but the game has many other benefits," said North Lanarkshire Leisure's Jim Moffat.

"From a funding point of view we used golf as the catalyst to the secondary benefits. If kids are playing golf then they are more physically active, so in the long term they will be healthier and there is less likelihood they will be a burden on the NHS. That gave us the opportunity to approach the local health board.

"If kids are playing golf then they are less likely to be distracted by anti social behavior. So there was a good reason to invite the Strathclyde Police on board."

The meeting led to the formation of the North Lanarkshire Golf Development Group (NLGDG). Its main partners are North Lanarkshire Leisure, North Lanarkshire Education, clubgolf, local golf clubs and three local sports councils, Monklands, Motherwell and Cumbernauld. Others who are the Leisure Trust, Awards for All and Nike.

The NLGDG produced a four year action plan, complementing the clubgolf strategy and taking into account local needs. It addressed four key areas: grass roots development, volunteer development, club development and related activities.

"Our main target was to stimulate an interest by introducing golf into every primary school in North Lanarkshire," said Mr Moffat.

"Each school would have six coaching sessions. Of equal importance was to provide each school with Tri Golf kit on the understanding the school sent a volunteer to an Activator training course.

"We offered children that were interested the opportunity to experience golf in a natural environment at a local golf course."

### **Results and outcomes**

In 2008 the NLGDG achieved full roll of clubgolf's introductory game; over 4,000 children in the area's 129 primary schools had an introduction to golf.

The group has trained over 300 activators to deliver in local schools and more than 50 volunteer Level 1 coaches to work at local facilities.

**Success criteria**

"It's all down to the mix of partners, the involvement of the community and the investment in the volunteers," said Mr Moffat.

"None of this would have been successful if it hadn't been for the mix of the community, the police, the health board, the education department and clubgolf all coming together to support the programme."

**What next**

The NLGDG is now looking at developing children that show potential and are in the process of forming a development squad that can represent North Lanarkshire in competitions.

In February 2009 there were 60 names on the list waiting to be assessed to hopefully be part of a squad.

**Full interview with Jim Moffat from North Lanarkshire Leisure (February 2009)****In 2008 North Lanarkshire became the first authority in Scotland to give every P5 child an introduction to golf. How did it start?**

Our golf development started in 2002 with an initial pilot in primary schools. Due to its success we felt there was a need for a more formalized long term golf development programme.

**The North Lanarkshire Golf Development Group has been the driving force behind this success. How did the Group start?**

The plan was to get the whole community involved and make golf accessible to every child. In 2005 we invited all parties to a consultation meeting – local golf clubs, the health board, the police and the education department - and explained what we were hoping to do in the future.

We drew up a four year action plan, a strategy which complemented the clubgolf strategy, taking into account local needs as well as the targets set by the Scottish Executive. We came up with four key areas to address; grass roots development, volunteer development, club development and related activities.

**Before the Group formed what were the opportunities for junior golfers?**

On the two municipal golf courses we operate there was no coordinated junior activity within. It was ad hoc, there was no structure for the kids to be coached at various levels, no structure for volunteers to go through various coaching levels and no emphasis on monitoring golf.

The private clubs would have had their own structures but there were barriers to some children because of the cost. We have tried to reduce the barriers by providing equipment and subsidizing courses.

**What was the Group's first priority?**

Our main target was to stimulate an interest by introducing golf into every primary school in North Lanarkshire. We want to show kids that golf was fun first and foremost and give them the opportunity to learn basic chipping and putting skills.

Each school would have six coaching sessions. Of equal importance was to provide each school with Tri Golf kit on the understanding the school sent a volunteer to an Activator training course.

We took the sport in to the schools, demonstrated to the kids over six weeks what was involved then we left the resources so the school could continue delivery whenever it suited them.

So far we have trained over 300 activators. We have done training with organizations such as the Boys Brigade, and with local college students, kids who are doing Junior Sports Leaders Awards at secondary schools.

We also targeted the special needs schools and supported local events and festivals to promote what we were doing.

We achieved full roll out in every school in 2008. Over 4,000 children in our 129 primary schools had an introduction to golf.

### **What were the exit routes from schools?**

We offered children that were interested the opportunity to experience golf in a natural environment at a local golf course. We ran a series of clubgolf Level 1 courses at Palacerigg and Coatbridge Golf Clubs, during Easter and summer schools. clubgolf made the links with the local clubs. The courses were heavily subsidized to make sure the kids had the opportunity to try golf on a real golf facility.

### **What's your attitude to volunteer coaches?**

Over 50 volunteers have been trained as Level 1 coaches. As with everything we have tried to do, it is all about quality. We wanted to make sure the coaches were trained to the highest standards, not only in the sports specific area but also generically. It goes without saying they met all the child protection standards, had been trained and disclosed. Once they had done their Activator and Level 1 courses we had them trained in health and safety, first aid and disability training.

### **How do you retain so many volunteer coaches?**

Volunteers are like gold dust and without them the cost of delivering this programme would have been way beyond anything we could afford.

If we can reward them or make them have ownership it makes it a lot easier for us to achieve what we're achieving.

We find volunteers want to do the coaching anyway and we thank them by providing quality material, such as clothing, and giving them tickets for major events such as the Johnnie Walker Championships.

We don't charge for the training courses, we pick up that, and we give volunteers expenses which several funding agencies such as the Lottery will help with. We make a substantial investment in training for them which we hope will also reward them in other areas of life. It's all about their continued personal development.

### **What else do you do to promote golf to local children?**

In partnership with clubgolf we've taken the kids to the Johnnie Walker Championships at Gleneagles and the Golf Show, specific things so the children can see the bigger picture.

One of the most successful activities was the formation of the first junior golf course in Scotland at St Stephen's school in Coatbridge. It's a 6-hole junior course which was funded through the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and sponsored by the police and local businesses. It can be booked by any school in North Lanarkshire and provides opportunities for kids to get out and play the game on grass.

The school has set up its own mini club, so they have taken complete ownership of the project, and they have taken it forward which is what we want. We involved the community from the start. They have had one broken tree in four years because they see it as their golf course.

### **How do you attract and retain your partners?**

Golf is obviously the main driver but the game has many other benefits. From a funding point of view we used golf as the catalyst to the secondary benefits.

Our main partners are North Lanarkshire Leisure, North Lanarkshire Education, clubgolf, several local golf clubs and the three local sports councils, Monklands, Motherwell and Cumbernauld.

If kids are playing golf then they are more physically active, so in the long term they will be healthier and there is less likelihood they will be a burden on the NHS. That gave us the opportunity to approach the local health board.

If kids are playing golf then they are less likely to be distracted by anti social behavior. So there was a good reason to invite the Strathclyde Police on board.

It's important to have the community involvement, particularly when you're looking for external funding. You need to explain the long term benefits of golf to get them on board. For instance, if a kid is playing golf they're more likely to have higher self esteem. Golf is a great leveler. It doesn't matter if you are poor at other sports, golf is universal. It breaks down the social barriers as well.

### **How crucial to your success is the partnership approach?**

None of this would have been successful if it hadn't been for the mix of the community, the police, the health board, the education department and clubgolf all coming together to support the programme.

Out with the statutory agencies, those who contribute to the group are: the Leisure Trust; Awards for All; and Nike, who support with clubs and equipment, which we Sportsmatch the value of, allowing us to invest in more equipment; private clubs have contributed.

### **What difference did the creation of clubgolf make?**

We worked with the Golf Foundation before there was a national strategy. When clubgolf was launched it gave us a weight, leverage into local golf clubs.

We were able to say there was a strategy supported by the Scottish Executive and more clubs took notice.

Private clubs support us in different ways. They might not be involved at grassroots level, which is fine; we can't go in and dictate after a hundred years of history. For example clubs support us by letting us use their facilities for training. If we have a first aid course clubs let us use their facility free of charge, which keeps the financial burden down on the group. So we can put money back into the most important thing which is getting kids on golf courses

### **What was the perception of golf before you created the Group?**

Golf has perhaps been perceived as being quite elitist. So what we've tried to do is remove that elite status IF it actually exists.

What we are saying is anyone can play golf and we will help by providing the necessary tools. We get the equipment so the children don't feel intimidated by the thought of going on a golf course.

Like every sport everybody should have the opportunity to try it and if they choose that sport we will make it possible for them to reach their potential.

### **Has that perception changed?**

Yes, definitely. The kids we work with are now confident enough to book onto our golf courses and carry on by themselves.

### **What is the Group's plan now?**

We're looking at developing kids that show a bit of potential and we're in the process of forming a development squad that can represent North Lanarkshire in competitions.

Our main partners have sent letters to parents and we have 60 names on the list waiting to be assessed to hopefully be part of a squad.

We will have a few open sessions and John Mulgrew from the PGA is on the group as our technical advisor. Clare Queen came from a local golf course so she is a good role model. We want to create a pathway for the kids so they can reach a high level.

### **In summary why has the Group been so successful?**

It's all down to the mix of partners, the involvement of the community and the investment in the volunteers.

