

Dear Sir,

I am contacting you regarding decision to close Western Park Golf Course

I find the situation regarding Western Park very frustrating. The course is a great asset of the people of Leicester that has been neglected and allowed to decline by the Council. The whole consultation process was completely one sided and then the results has been ignored. We have never been allowed to enter into a meaningful discussion regarding the future of the course and any arguments we have made to buy the course time have fallen on deaf ears.

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Western Park Golf Course has been part of the community in Leicester since 1910. It has provided a vital link for people to take up the sport of golf and has served as a feeder club for the private courses. The club has proud history of generating great young golfers and has achieved county and national honours every year since the sixties up to the present day. Golfers who started at Western Park include Jason Palmer (European Tour), David Gibson (County Champion) and Coby Cartwright (LRGU Junior Champion). These golfers along with many others may not have had the chance to take up golf it wasn't for affordable access to facilities such as Western Park.

We understand that large cuts in governing funding mean the Council has to review previously funded activities. We accept that we are asking the council to continue to fund the course in the short term but with a 2-3 year plan of advertising and maintenance, the course can be as popular as it was in the past. The Council need to accept responsibility for the decline of a golf course that until recent times has always made a profit.

Since attending the original scrutiny meeting, I have contacted a number of ex members, committee members and ex professionals that have worked at the course. The general consensus is that the course is a fantastic asset that it would be a travesty for it to close. The course has been allowed to decline by the council over the last 10-15 years and that is the reason for the current situation.

I forwarded this information to the Mayor and he said he would take it into consideration. However, it is obvious now he had no intension of putting together a case to keep the course open.

I have started a petition on change.org and it would appear from the comments on the petition and in the Mercury that most people share the same opinion as me that the whole process has been fabricated to allow the land to be sold.

It is the duty of the Council to maintain and keep the assets of Leicester for future generations not run them into ground by not reinvesting profits or selling them for building land or road development as soon as there is a plausible excuse.

Consultation Process

The two consultations carried out by the City Council were very one-sided and the results have been ignored.

The first in March 2014 asked the public if they thought the council should continue to subsidise the two Council-owned golf courses and threatened that funding for other leisure activities may have to be cut if both courses remained open. Despite the fact this was being pushed at every leisure centre Leicester, 90% of responses supported continuation of the subsidy for the two courses.

In the second in July the public were consulted on the proposal to close Western Park Golf Course and invest in Humberstone Heights. "Enabling the Council to continue providing a quality municipal golf course while also making necessary budget cuts." 62% of responses did not support this.

The second consultation in July was accompanied by a report to the Heritage, Culture, Leisure and Sport Commission. This report was heavily biased towards Humberstone Heights and many of the arguments and facts listed could be turned around in favour of Western Park.

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Environmental

Leicester has recently been in the news regarding its poor air pollution rating. High levels of nitrogen dioxide caused by traffic is recognised by the government as the second biggest health risk after smoking. Western Park Golf Course consists of a 148 acres of mature parkland situated next to a large housing estate and soon to be expanded industrial estate. The latest rumour is that a road being planned that will pass through the existing golf course to allow access for the industrial estate.

The Mayor has already admitted that some of the golf course land will be built on. The only way to protect this vital area of green belt is for it to remain as a golf course.

Elderly Members

Sandy Jones CEO of the PGA is calling on the government to give grants to golf clubs because they act as hubs for elderly people who have lost their partners. Western Park has a large number of senior members who play at least twice a week. Most of whom have stated that they will give up golf when the course is closed

I am not a professional golfer or a business man. However, with a small amount of research I come to the conclusion that Western Park Golf Course is a viable business. There are thousands of young people in the surrounding area that deserve access to the 5th most popular sport in the UK. A recent survey found that there is a latent demand for golf and it is only the perceived barriers to entering the sport that stops them. Why not use the publicity that is surrounding the course as free advertising!

The course needs to be given a chance, as it is much better than it is given credit for. We cannot let this valuable asset be wasted without at least trying to make it work first

Regards

Martin Cobb