

Future of Entry Hill and Approach Golf Courses

Speaking Note for 22nd July 20 Cabinet

FoBRA brings together 33 individual residents' associations across Bath, with a combined membership of around 5000. We citizens treasure our green spaces, both for recreation and for the appearance and beauty of this World Heritage City: *rus in urbe* being one of the key features of Bath's inscription by UNESCO in 1987. So residents are always worried when these 'lungs' are threatened with change. Clarity and consultation must be watchwords, therefore. Perhaps, as an added protection, one or both areas should be declared Local Green Spaces to ensure their conservation in perpetuity, particularly as the Local Plan is entering a review process.

The two sites which you are considering today are on opposite sides of the city and are very different: linked only by golf and the fact that both seem to be operating at a loss. There has been much consultation on the future of Entry Hill, but a worrisome variation in the origin of many respondents, seemingly from most of the country, whereas one would have expected both equal treatment and local interest to predominate. This casts doubt on the validity of the consultation. Nothing similar has yet been done for the Approach; so, if any material change is contemplated there, for example on the 12-hole course, consultation has to take place.

As far as golf is concerned, Entry Hill is a Handicap course, registered with British Golf, whereas Approach is not, so they are rather different animals. Both are also enjoyed by walkers, for relaxation and for observation of the wildlife, so some form of area management is vital, if only to prevent the kind of 'bad behaviour' which has sadly been seen there during Lockdown. They can't be allowed simply to 'go wild'.

It is right in these straitened times that you investigate whether the reported revenue losses can be reduced or eliminated, but let this not be at the expense of their continuing to be fine open spaces, freely available for recreation. In recent years the Cabinet paper shows Approach to have made a profit; and I understand that at least one of the commercial bidders is confident that this can soon happen again, and with both sites, if properly managed, thereby solving the financial problem as well as taking the risk from the Council. There are nearby examples which are profitable.

Uses other than golf have been proposed for Entry Hill, such as a biking park, which might be even more popular than golf. However, during the bidding process, the Council would have to make sure it was not left with an expensive white elephant, which might also cause more noise, traffic and parking in a quiet residential area than golf does. I would particularly urge therefore that the criteria for marking bids,

mentioned in para 2.3 of your paper, are made public, and that you insist on the final decision coming back to you, or even to a full Council meeting.

Thank you.

Robin Kerr, Chairman, final, 22nd July 20