

BATHNES COUNCIL CABINET MEETING 11/02/2021

JUSTIN DRAEGER SPEAKING NOTE (FOR ATTACHMENT TO THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING)

I, Justin Draeger, make the following representations in my capacity as chair of The Cavendish Road Society, the Residents Association covering Cavendish Road, Park Street and Park Street. These are areas that overlook the Approach Golf Course/High Common and our residents make extensive use of this beautiful green space.

I strongly urge the Cabinet to reject the only bid which has been made for the Approach Golf Course and to pause the whole process of finding a service provider for the Course, at least until the pandemic has come to an end.

I would like to make 2 preliminary points:

1. It is extremely unfortunate, in my estimation, that such an amount of disinformation has been forthcoming over the past days about what decision the Cabinet is being asked to make tonight. It has been said to residents: “Don’t worry this is just the start of the process. Nothing has been decided yet. Residents will be consulted”. Politely put, this is simply disingenuous. The people who have been saying this know perfectly well that the Cabinet’s decision tonight is a binary one: to accept or reject the bid. If the bid is accepted, the Council is locked into the contractual process. It would not be possible for the Council to say that they want golf on the Course if the bidder has offered to provide disc golf. Residents will only be consulted, to the extent it could even be called a “consultation”, about implementation, not the substance of the sport provision.
2. Residents have been prevented from knowing any of the details of the bid whatsoever under the pretext that this is what is required in the bidding process. Even tonight residents have no clear idea of what the bidder has offered. Yet the Council felt that it was right and proper last week to tweet trumpeting that an exciting new sport provision was arriving at the Approach Golf Course. This before residents had a chance to speak

tonight and before the Cabinet had even voted on the bid. Frankly, this sort of conduct is undemocratic and an abuse of process.

Having made these preliminary points, I want to say the following. Last year, in a meeting with concerned residents, Cllr Crossley gave residents a clear, unequivocal undertaking that golf or golf derived activity would remain on the 18 hole course at the Approach. There was therefore no need for a public consultation, he said.

When pressed to explain what he meant by “golf derived” activity, he became annoyed saying he did not understand why residents were harping on this point because he was simply using the phrase since he felt that some people considered pitch-and-putt golf not to be true golf.

He reiterated there would be no change of use on the 18 hole course. Residents took him at his word.

Any right-thinking person would consider that an arrangement whereby golfers are thrown off the course they have used for the past 60 years in favour of a “sport” that involves throwing a disc at a net concreted into the surface of the Golf Course amounts to a change of use.

Residents understand that disc golf would also mean less maintenance of the Approach, leaving extensive unkempt areas which will make it much more difficult for parents, children, dog-walkers and alpine walkers to use it safely (but presumably providing excellent places to throw beer cans, used needles and condoms).

In summary, I strongly urge the Cabinet to reject the bid that is on the table and pause until at least the pandemic is over. It is commercial madness to rush to accept the only offer that is on the table at a time like this, particularly when the proposal is almost universally opposed by residents and golfers alike.

Thank you.