

BEN REED – STATEMENT TO B&NES COUNCIL MEETING 12/05/22

Good evening everyone. You may recognise me from a couple of previous appearances at Council meetings as the organiser of a petition to keep Bath Approach Golf Course open. The recent announcement by the Council of a new procurement exercise to find an operator is fantastic news, and represents a chance to maximise the benefits of the site for all residents of B&NES. As we enter a third summer of temporary closure, the Council continues to bear the unplanned for burden of paying for maintenance, the café and toilets lie closed and empty, and large portions of most days see far fewer people using the space than in past years.

I know golf isn't to everyone's taste, but pitch and putt is of course the cheap and cheerful cousin of a sport which admittedly can be expensive and elitist. This little version of golf is all at once the ideal taster activity to bring people into the sport, a great fun activity for groups of families and friends, perfect gentle exercise for older people, and by virtue of hired golf clubs even suitable for tourists visiting Bath for a day or two. Anyone who like me was born and raised in Bath will know how popular the Approach Course has always been, and just how much appetite there still is for a well-maintained and well-run facility which can literally appeal to almost anyone. This is why over 5,000 people have signed my petition to keep the Approach Course open.

It's important that recent concerns raised by some local residents are addressed, and it's good to see the Council taking these on board. I applaud and wholeheartedly support the Council's desire to eliminate chemical use on site. It's also absolutely vital that no access restrictions of any description are introduced. The harmonious co-existence of pitch and putt over many years with all manner of other users of the site must be the template for any tender proposals. Golf does require quite a lot of space it's true, and if commercial viability allows, which I believe it does, then I'd personally love to see the space developed to incorporate a community garden, wildflower areas and additional tree planting. Combined with a refurbished and revitalised café and the reopening of the toilets I believe this procurement can unlock the huge potential for High Common to become a focal point for the local community, at the same time as bringing people back to the site from across B&NES and beyond. I'm very optimistic that this can be a real success story for Bath over the coming years.

Thank you!