

The bottom line is that the potential growth area of the golf industry is in attracting visiting golfers who are comfortable arranging their golf online. Clubs which are focussing their core strategy on this market are growing by differentiating themselves from the traditional golf club, offering and appealing to a younger audience. *Morley Hayes* in Derbyshire and *The Astbury* in Shropshire both provide particularly interesting non-member golf club case studies. Their operations are purely visitor focussed and concentrate on providing an enjoyable experience without any concerns about a conflict of interest between visitors and members. Nomadic golfers are likely to become a larger and more lucrative proportion of the market as lifestyles and the game continue to evolve.

Better Provision for Lady Golfers

Jeremy Ellwood looks at the need for change in several areas to attract more women to the game...

In days gone by, the golf club was a bastion of maleness, with women implicitly or explicitly discouraged from venturing inside. Society has moved on from those less enlightened days, but while golf clubs too have been changing, male to female membership percentages have never come remotely close to mirroring our 50/50 population split.

Change doesn't happen overnight, and some Clubs do still have much of the male-dominated model of yesteryear about them. But while others have been forward-thinking enough to appoint female Club captains, male golf club membership continues to outstrip female membership by around seven to one. There can only be three potential underlying reasons:

1. Golf doesn't appeal as much to women as men;
2. Clubs are not making the transition from beginner to regular player or member easy enough for women; or
3. What is on offer is not appealing enough to many women.

I don't believe the first to really be the case, so let's home on the other two.

Opinions vary over the extent to which gender equality is being achieved in our wider society, but whatever your view, we are far enough on from the dawning of the drive to equality for male-to-female Club membership ratios to now be considerably closer than they are. So why aren't they? Again, opinions vary, but while much has been done at many Clubs to make the legality or technicality of equality a reality, perhaps less has been done to make the golf club environment one that appeals as readily to women as it does to men. The modern proprietary Clubs lead the way here, unhampered by decades of male-dominated history and tradition.

The Equality Act 2010 has forced changes to Club rules, but beyond that, little has been done at some Clubs to create a more welcoming environment for women golfers, with the steps from beginner to developing golfer and on into membership quite daunting. Many Clubs operate ladies' group lessons and coffee mornings for beginners and those in their formative golfing years, but not enough is always done to facilitate the

transition into membership. It's a big step from £100 for a series of lessons straight on into £1,000+ a year for membership in some areas of the country. Does your Club do anything to make that transition less daunting via taster, flexible or even nine-hole memberships? Stepping stones rather than giant leaps may be required.

The Golf Union of Wales (GUW) has been particularly active on this front, with its New2Golf beginner scheme under the Golf Development Wales (GDW) banner beginning to have an impact on female participation and membership. GDW has been providing funding and support to Clubs throughout Wales, encouraging them to provide a warm welcome, free taster sessions and low-cost, fun, group lessons, with those who sign up then supported all the way on into membership.

In the last two years, over 1,800 people have taken up New2Golf memberships, and 60% have been female. Last year, over 41,000 people participated in GDW schemes at nearly 90 Clubs, with over 50% of those Clubs running female-specific schemes. "We don't just give beginners a taste of golf and then launch them headlong into full Club membership, which would be intimidating," says GUW development director, Hannah Fitzpatrick. "Beginners are supported over a period of time, concentrating on helping them to develop their new skills, while just as importantly introducing the social side of the sport."

Ah, the social side. In a survey for Golf Monthly by SPORTS MARKETING SURVEYS INC last year, Club members were asked the main reason for being a member. Many reasons (e.g. the chance to play whenever, competitions, official handicaps) got a similar number of votes from men and women, but there was a marked difference when it came to the social environment, with 54% of women citing it as an important factor compared to only 45% of men. So more Clubs might consider taking steps to make the clubhouse environment less 'pub' and more somewhere in which everyone can feel comfortable. For example, do many women want to sit in a bar where either side of the room big-screen TVs are blaring out football updates on constant loop? Some, of course, do, but probably fewer than the number of men who revel in such environments.

One other issue brought to my attention recently was that of women's tees and whether or not they are an obstacle to women taking up the game or remaining involved. American course designer Kari Haug certainly thinks so. I recently heard her speak at the European Institute of Golf Course Architects (EIGCA) 'Golf for all' conference in Portugal on the subject of promoting inclusion and improving playability for women. She believes that because the golf course is primarily designed with men in mind, women pick up on that and take their leisure business elsewhere. She also feels that as women are often the main 'influencers' within the home, this then becomes a reason why more families don't get involved in golf either.

I don't want to get into deep sociological discourse here, but even within my own home I sense this may be true. Yes, my son is a member at the golf club with me. But beyond that, the initial instigation for nearly everything my children do has come from my wife, whether scouts, rainbow guides, saxophone lessons, dance groups or whatever. If golf could position itself where it was a higher priority in the minds of the female influencers, then maybe all categories of membership would benefit. That was the gist of Kari's talk, and while I'm not sure to what extent tees may be a stumbling block, it's worth listening to what she had to say.

Kari argued that women's tees are often underthought, under-built and too small, and invariably there is only one option for all abilities while men enjoy greater choice. She pointed to this patronising paragraph in the PGA of America Playbook, which for her, summed up the problem. "Forward tees don't have to be too onerous: just have the superintendent mow out an area of fairway in a suitable place – it needn't be too expensive." An afterthought slotted in wherever suits at no great cost – that's dangerous on several counts. First, it will look just that – an afterthought. Second, it may mean women can't play the hole as really intended because they may be unable to reach the target hitting area, or go beyond it. Worse still, if their tee is tucked away out of sight of the men's tee, it may create the wrong angle for the hole and have them effectively playing in the wrong direction.

I don't know if such issues do hamper the recruitment and retention of women members, but any scenario which makes someone feel merely an afterthought rather than a primary concern can't be wise. Yes, you could argue that women's tees should be much smaller because so many fewer women play, so there is less wear and tear. But that's playing to what is, rather than what you wish for – hardly a facilitator for growth. Far-fetched? Possibly, but if growing your female membership is important, it may be one element of a 'no stones unturned' approach to remedying things. Kari went on to argue that few courses offer a 'player development tee' for improving ladies between 5,000 and 6,000 yards: "Attrition among developing golfers occurs at two points – the beginner stage when the course is just too long, and a second stage when skill has developed but there is no realistic tee to advance to as they progress." Your Club may have adequate tee provision over a range of distances, but if not, could you make your ladies' tees big enough to accommodate a couple of options, or perhaps create a second set using the front part of the men's tees? Or might it be wise if we moved away from gender differentiation between tees to just a distance differentiation, where golfers can choose their tees based on ability, mood, weather conditions, course conditions or whatever, rather than whether or not they tick the F or M box on any application form?

Tee Pee

In 2011 Tee Pee started to design a urinal for outdoor sports locations, in particular golf courses and driving ranges where there were few or no facilities. This was a reflection of the national situation following the decline in public conveniences over recent years as outlined in: *The Provision of Public Toilets: Twelfth Report of Session 2007-08; Report ... By House of Commons Communities and Local Government 2008.*

Unlike the decline in public conveniences, urinals in these sporting locations were, up until now, not practical as there were no 'mains' services to allow installations over a wide geographical area and the building of half way houses was both impractical, requiring significant permissions and cost, and were invariably sited in close proximity to the clubhouse. This solution did not solve the problem of facilities being required anywhere on the course for the benefit of all, including existing older members (being the largest group of golfers),

ladies, girls and juniors being encouraged into the game by leading authorities i.e. Golf England, Sport England etc. Neither was the introduction of portable loos the answer, with installations restricted to within 30 metres of a suitable roadway to facilitate an HGV tanker for emptying, virtually no ventilation, chemical additives for the waste (to try and mask the smells), which just sat there until emptied and a reluctance by females to sit down in such places. It was necessary to invent something that would satisfy the following criteria:

- The design should be distinctively modern and **not** be easily recognisable as a convenience
- It should encompass the latest technology and materials to ensure functionality and purpose
- It should be light and airy and pleasant to use by both sexes and capable of easy relocation
- It should be strong and safe and withstand adverse weather conditions anywhere on the course
- It should be clean and fresh with no aromas or unpleasant smells
- It should not freeze-up in winter
- It must be low maintenance but still be easily serviceable periodically
- It must provide privacy and dignity when being used by both sexes
- It should show signs of occupation and at the same time afford the facility to look out by the occupant for reassurance of privacy
- There should be a choice of different models to suit levels of screening required and budgets
- It should be pre-assembled and easily installed
- There should be no barriers to installation or red tape
- It should comply with all current and foreseeable legislation and environmentally friendly
- It should be carbon friendly and/or recyclable
- Servicing should be at acceptable intervals and at a reasonable cost
- The operation should be automatic and not present any Health & Safety issues
- The cleaning and maintenance schedule should be easy to perform
- Bespoke designs should be available to personalise the product with logos and colour options.

All the above criteria have been satisfied and along the way have ensured that the existing laws below, affecting individuals and organisations, have been considered and hopefully mitigated through design. These prosecutions can result in significant fines, criminal records (mandatory) and in repeated offences, a custodial sentence, the onus being on the person to prove his/her innocence.

1. Public Order Act 1986...harassment, alarm or distress
2. Sexual Offences Act 2003...indecent exposure
3. Anti Social Behaviour Act...urinating in public
4. Under Scots Law...Crimes of indecency.

With the change in attitudes reflected in the legislation above and the changes in acceptable behaviour around a mixed membership and juniors, the acceptance of the product and its widespread installation will only reinforce good habits and acceptable behaviour in a family oriented game and at the same time mitigate any 'negligence' on the part of the organization in not providing suitable facilities.