

## Kinsale Golf Club



## Golf Course Improvement Plan



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## 1. Introduction

I am pleased to be invited to submit the "Golf Course Improvement Plan" for Kinsale Golf Club. I am very familiar with your golf course and regard it highly as a golfing test and venue.

This report will offer my opinions on the current state of the course and will conclude with my suggestions for an improved golfing environment. The report should be read in conjunction with the Hole-By-Hole analysis (Section 9) which includes the proposals for improving the course.

## 2. Ken Kearney Golf Design

Ken Kearney Golf Design is owned and operated by myself, Ken Kearney. I have a lifetime of experience in golf, having represented Connacht, Ireland, Great Britain and Ireland, and Europe at the highest levels of the game over a twenty-five year period.

I was fortunate to have had a reasonably successful playing career, with wins at The West of Ireland (1992); 2 x East of Ireland titles (1999 and 2001) and An Irish Close title (1997).

I have always had a passion for the art of golf course architecture and undertook a two-year study program at Edinburgh College of Art, Landscape School, studying Golf Course Architecture, which culminated in my graduation in 2006.

We employ 2 staff on a contract basis. At KKGD, we pride ourselves on "thinking outside the box". This does not mean we do not adhere to the classic values of our forefathers of architecture – quite the opposite. We embrace it but bring it to the modern era.

We employ all modern technology at our practice and ongoing training is critical to our business. AutoCAD, Illustrator, Photoshop and all manners of digitised imaging ensure our clients receive a quality service.

I hold a current Professional Indemnity Insurance policy. When you employ the services of KKGD, you can be assured of a professional service....and a great golf course.

References are available. We have been fortunate to work at some of the premier golf clubs in Ireland Belvoir Park GC, Portmarnock Links GC, Killarney Golf and Fishing Club, Ardglass GC, Foxrock GC, Grange GC to name just a few.

### 3. First Impressions

First impressions at the club are that of an excellent facility with a modern clubhouse. However, it is the golf course that will ultimately define the future of the club.

The course sits on a beautiful site and it is well presented. The input and enthusiasm of the Head greenkeeper is acknowledged.

The golf course has been evolving over the years and there is no doubt that it now requires an investment to bring it to a higher level, which is very achievable. The potential for Kinsale GC is fantastic. The routing is sound and with investment in upgrading some of the golfing features, the course is capable of hosting the very best golf tournaments in Ireland, as well as attracting bigger volumes of visitors.

I suggested during my visit that the course looks "tired". Some of the golfing features / strategies need to be updated, particularly the bunkers. The mowing lines on the fairway are good but in places they must be altered to give a better golfing strategy and a better look to the course. Excellent mowing lines will greatly enhance the look and particularly, the shot challenges.

The club is fortunate to have a beautiful landscape on which the course is laid out. The club invested in tree planting at an earlier time but many of the trees have matured well and the club must adopt a Tree Management Plan as a matter of priority. The trees must be addressed before they become a very expensive "fix".

The construction of water features is a nice and often times attractive feature. Critical to the success of water features is that they are correctly positioned and constructed in appropriate low areas and that (critically) the water will pass through them. The water features at the 9<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> are unnatural looking, particularly the 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. This is principally because they sit above the golfer and as well as a maintenance issue, they also cause a rules of golf issue.

Such water features need to be addressed in any remodel at the club and it will be essential that appropriate drainage and technicalities are specified and designed.

This document sets out the golfing features and course infrastructure that need to be concentrated on to bring Kinsale GC into the modern era of member club facilities.

#### 4. Tees – Ladies, Gentlemen and Others.

Tees are an important and yet often overlooked element of the golf course. Historically, the golfer was required to play the next shot from within two club lengths of the previous green. In the early 1900's the only requirement was to find a flat piece of ground and elevate the ball with a handful of sand.

Now the game has become formalised. The teeing ground needs to provide an even and level surface for the tee shot, but must also be of sufficient area to allow the regular re-siting of the teeing area so that players are provided with a full grass cover to play from, rather than the divot-marked and worn surface that golfers dislike.

I believe that the tees are performing well and the shapes and performance seems to be in order. No immediate remodel of tees is proposed.

#### 5. Green Complexes – original and new

The green complexes are generally of good quality. I suggest that a different mowing regime may be employed in some cases to the surrounds. While a variety in shapes and sizes is good, a consistency in style is essential to create a seamless golf course. The styling of the greens (and green complexes) needs to be consistent for the course to flow in a seamless fashion.

## 6. Bunkers – fairways and greenside

Bunkers provide the strongest visual constructed element of the golf course, with an impact second only to water as a hazard. Bunkers offer the architect the most scope for manipulating the manner in which a golfer perceives and tackles a golf hole.



*Strategic bunkering that encroaches into the line of play.*

*An old school style with a modern specification*

The bunkers at all great golf courses are very striking be they organic, classic or formal in their styling. Great bunkers provide the strategy and the framing of the golf hole. Bunkers should form a central element of any future remodel.

The bunkers are generally of a good quality and while the styling is important, the placement of the bunker is all-important. Proposed bunker remodels are suggested in Section 9.

## 7. Fairways and rough – mowing regimes - definition

While the fairways look to be well maintained, I suggest that perhaps a different mowing technique be employed to offer greater variety and a more aesthetically pleasing presentation.

Contour mowing is being employed in places on the course to give the fairways more interest and aesthetic appeal but it could be developed further. This method allows the fairways to respond in harmony with the natural topography and features which border the hole such as bunkers, mounds, hollows, trees and shrubs. It works best if the curves are gentle so as not to give too fussy or contrived an appearance.

Presentation is one of the most important ingredients in persuading the average golfer of the attributes of a golf course. If the presentation is poor, a golfer will rarely see past this issue to appreciate the quality of the layout or the fine strategy of a hole. Presentation is not merely a matter of good maintenance, or the establishment of a healthy and neatly cut sward, but the relationship of all the features that combine to make the golf hole.

The whole impression may be strengthened by forming a band of semi-rough as fringe to the fairway. Where space allows, a deeper rough can be cultivated beyond this. In generally out-of-play areas, native grass areas can be left to grow and be managed to encourage wild flora and fauna. The development of native grass areas will also contribute significantly to creating a definition in the playing corridor.

The value of native grass areas on the golf course is acknowledged. The use of native grasses to establish attractive, environmentally beneficial, low-maintenance areas is one of the most commonly desired types of natural areas. Areas of native grasses can result in financial savings, reduced fuel use and labour, reduced machinery maintenance bills and improved aesthetics. But more importantly we can create habitats for flora and fauna in offering the appropriate environment for them to flourish.

The development of better mowing lines is best done on site with The Head Greenkeeper. I will be happy to spend a day with him to set out the perimeter cuts to each hole and the maintenance team can fill in the cuts after. Particular emphasis must be placed on the green surrounds. They are very generic and in most cases lack interest in mowing lines. The best time to do this is in the near future when the playing season is over.

## 8. Woodlands / vegetation – how they impact on aesthetics and the playing strategy

Many areas of the course have been planted with a mixture of native and some non-native trees over the years. Non-native trees are not desirable at your golf course.

The planting of trees throughout golf courses is sometimes misguided, although well intentioned. There is a simple, non-negotiable trade-off between turf and trees. Turf needs light, water and air to thrive, and if trees impact on this, then it needs to be dealt with. Trees that overhang fairways, greens and tees create the most problems, mainly because those areas get the most foot traffic. The health of the turf provides an important tipoff to a potential tree problem.

The emphasis at Kinsale GC must be on the golfing strategies, superb presentation and the exceptional landscape on which lies the golfing land. Good landscape management is essential.

I am convinced that landscape enhancement will be critical to the future of the club. You will need to consider existing trees and/or plantations that are at, or near maturity. A Tree Management Plan will be critical to the success of the club.

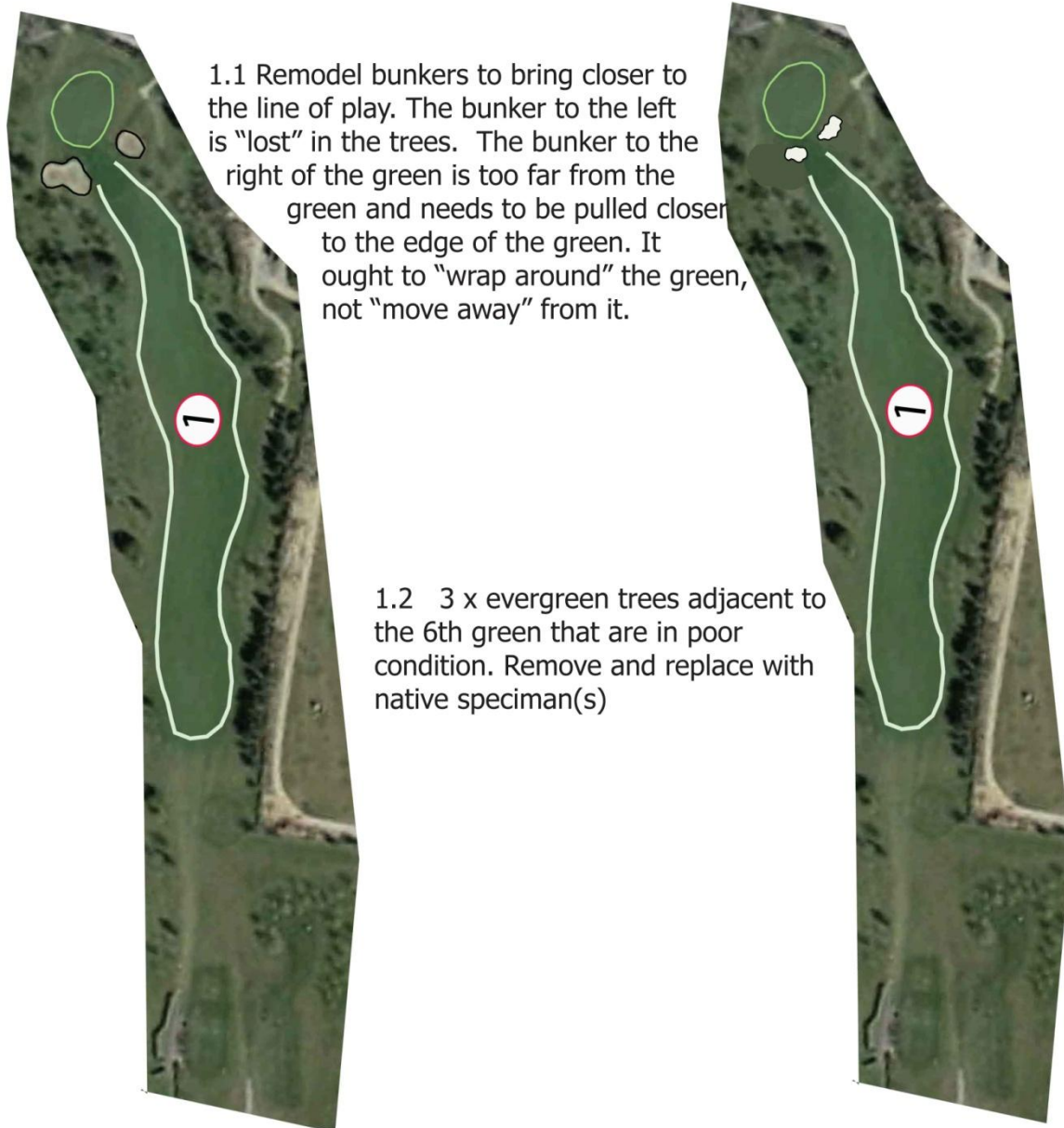


## 9. Hole – by – hole Analysis to include proposals for improvement

Every effort has been made to offer a sympathetic remodel program that will “fit” the golf course and provide for a consistent style that will look great and play well. The development of strong strategic shot-making is to the forefront of the proposals.

Nice opening hole that gets the golfer away without too much stress or confusion. The greenside bunkering is poor. The first hole should set the tone for the round of golf and critical from the club perspective to get it right.

Hole 1  
B. 372yds Par 4  
W.365yds Par 4  
L. 284yds Par 4





## Proposal 1st Hole



Now that the tree planting is maturing, the club must embark on a Tree Management Plan. This will be essential for sward and turf presentation but is also recommended as astute landscape management.

## Hole 2

B. 429yds Par 4

W. 387yds Par 4

L. 400yds Par 5



2.1 The club will need to manage the trees / woodland as part of the long term strategic planning of the golf course. The trees to the right are now very large and thinning out will be essential.

2.2 There are some beautiful hardwood trees to the right of the tee platform between 2nd tees and 5th hole but they are being seriously hindered by some leylandii and evergreen trees. They should be removed as part of a Tree Management Plan.

A nice shortish par 4 hole

Hole 3

B. 372yds Par 4

W. 336yds Par 4

L. 292yds Par 5





The first of the par 3s is a very demanding hole. Playing to 214yds from the Blue tees, 188yds from the White and 151yds for the Ladies. It is recommended to move the white tee to the new platform behind the Ladies Tee. It will play to +/-165 yards. The green will be more receptive to a shorter shot.

Hole 4  
B. 214y Par 3  
W. 188y Par 3  
L. 151y Par 3



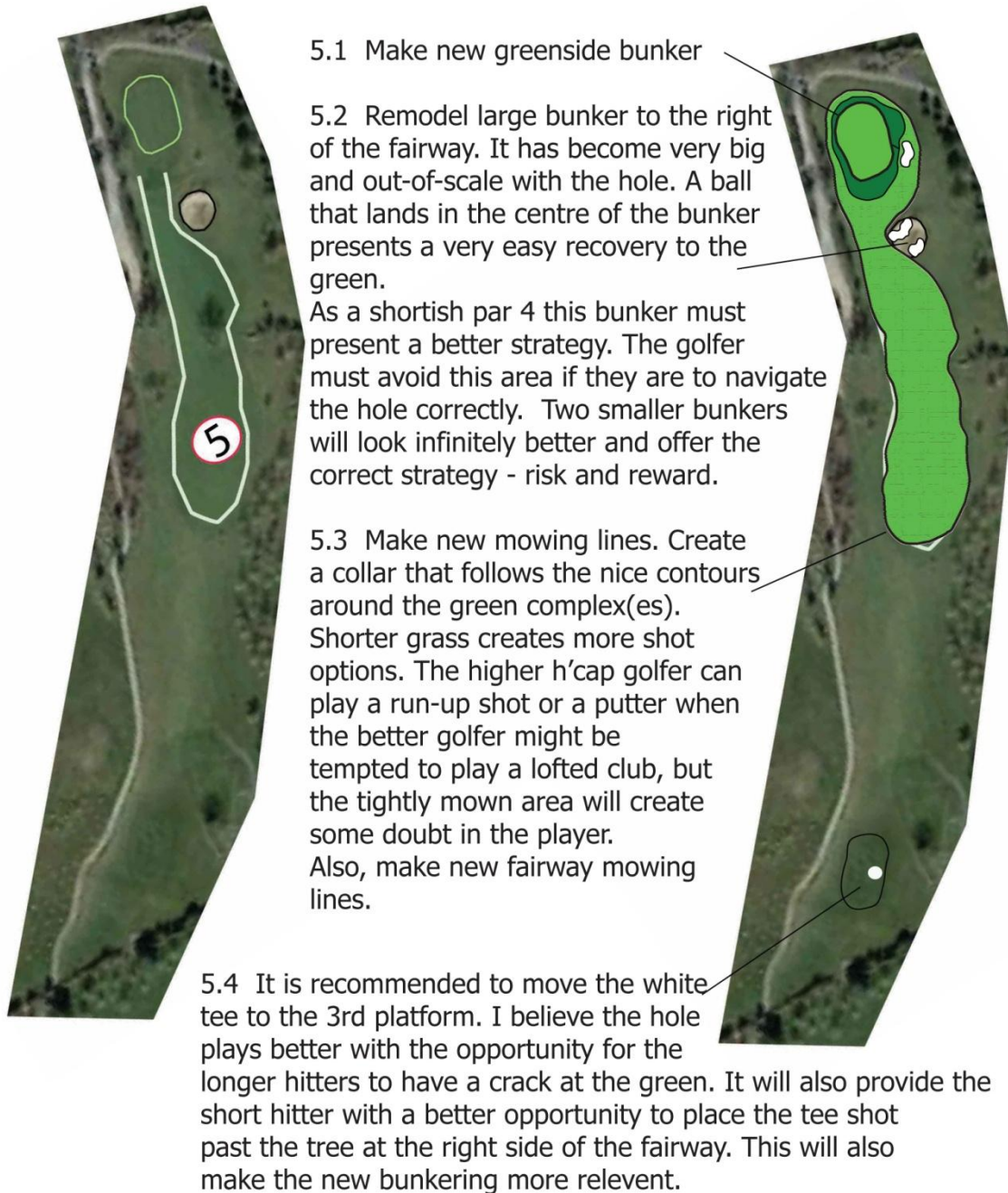
An excellent par 3 hole.  
The bunkering needs to be remodelled. Shapes have been lost and the bunkers require a complete overhaul. The positioning of the bunkers is sound and recommended to remodel them in situ.

The par 3s could be (generally) described as tough golf holes. The ideal arrangement of par 3s is to have a mix of lengths and orientations and not to always strive to play long, testing holes. The 15th offers a little reprieve, but not much.

A really nice short par 4 hole that could, and should, offer better golfing strategy.

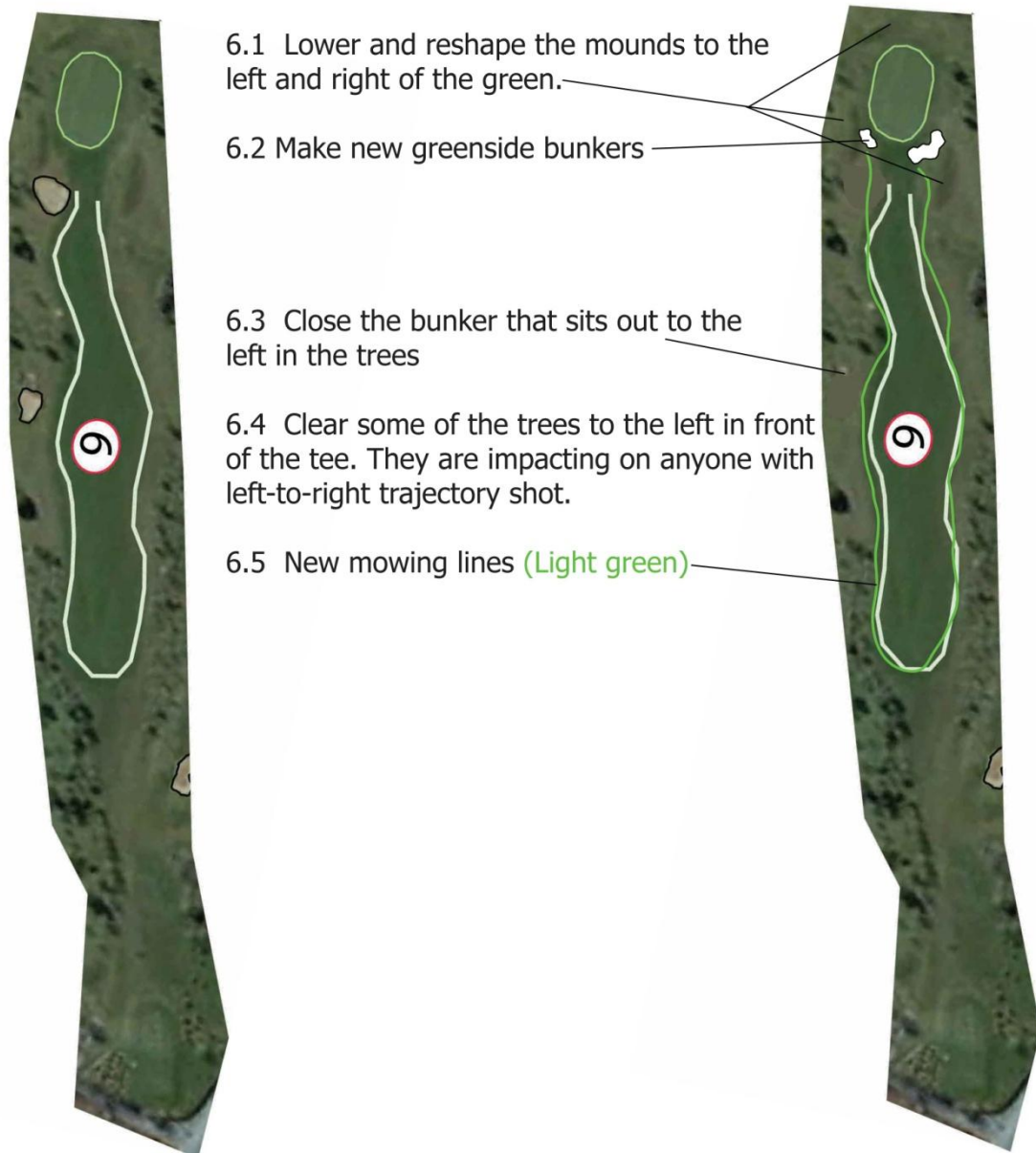
The mowing lines are an easy way to enhance the playability and aesthetics of the golf course. The best time to do this is the off-season and I am happy to attend and set-out the new lines when the current golf season has ended.

Hole 5  
B. 334y Par 4  
W. 311y Par 4  
L. 280y Par 4



A good par 4 that returns the golfer towards the clubhouse. The tee shot lacks definition as does the green. The mounds are a distraction when the golfer should be engaged by the hole, the strategy and the landscape.

Hole 6  
B. 368y Par 4  
W. 358y Par 4  
L. 296y Par 4







This is an excellent par 4. It comes at the right time in the round having played short and medium length par 4 holes at #5 and #6, with a par 5 to follow.

An issue presents with golf balls straying towards the clubhouse and car park. Currently the centre line of the fairway is +/- 55m from the boundary / road. The safety guideline is 60m-100m. Thus, we have little room to play with in realigning the hole away from the clubhouse.

We must look to the strategy of the hole.

## Hole 7

B. 431y Par 4

W. 370y Par 4

L. 346y Par 4



7.1 Reshape the mounds. Retain some of the height on the one at 8th tee for definition

7.2 Remodel the bunkers. Make the strategy that the right side of the fairway is the best line to the green - away from the clubhouse side

7.3 Create a split fairway to encourage the golfer to play a safe tee shot to the fairway, with the right side of the fairway being the obvious best line to the green.

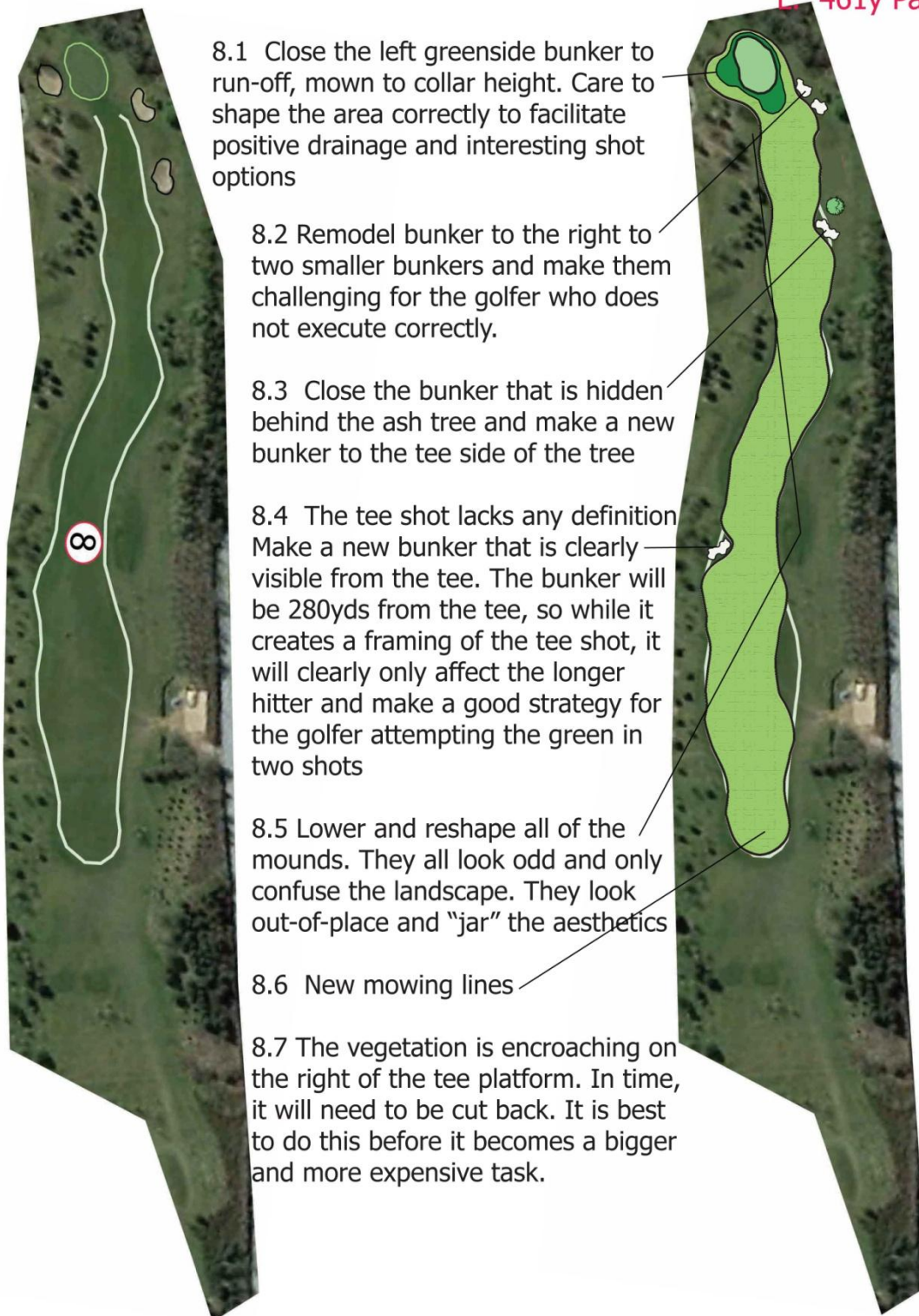
7.4 New mowing lines will create the definition and the playing lines

7.5 Relocate the white tee to the right side. Consideration to remodel / relocate the Blue Tee based on how the proposed new White Tee impacts the view. It will be important to keep the White Tee low in profile to minimise the opportunity for golfers to launch the ball to outside the playing corridor.



The first par 5 of the round. It plays over nice terrain but the hole lacks framing.

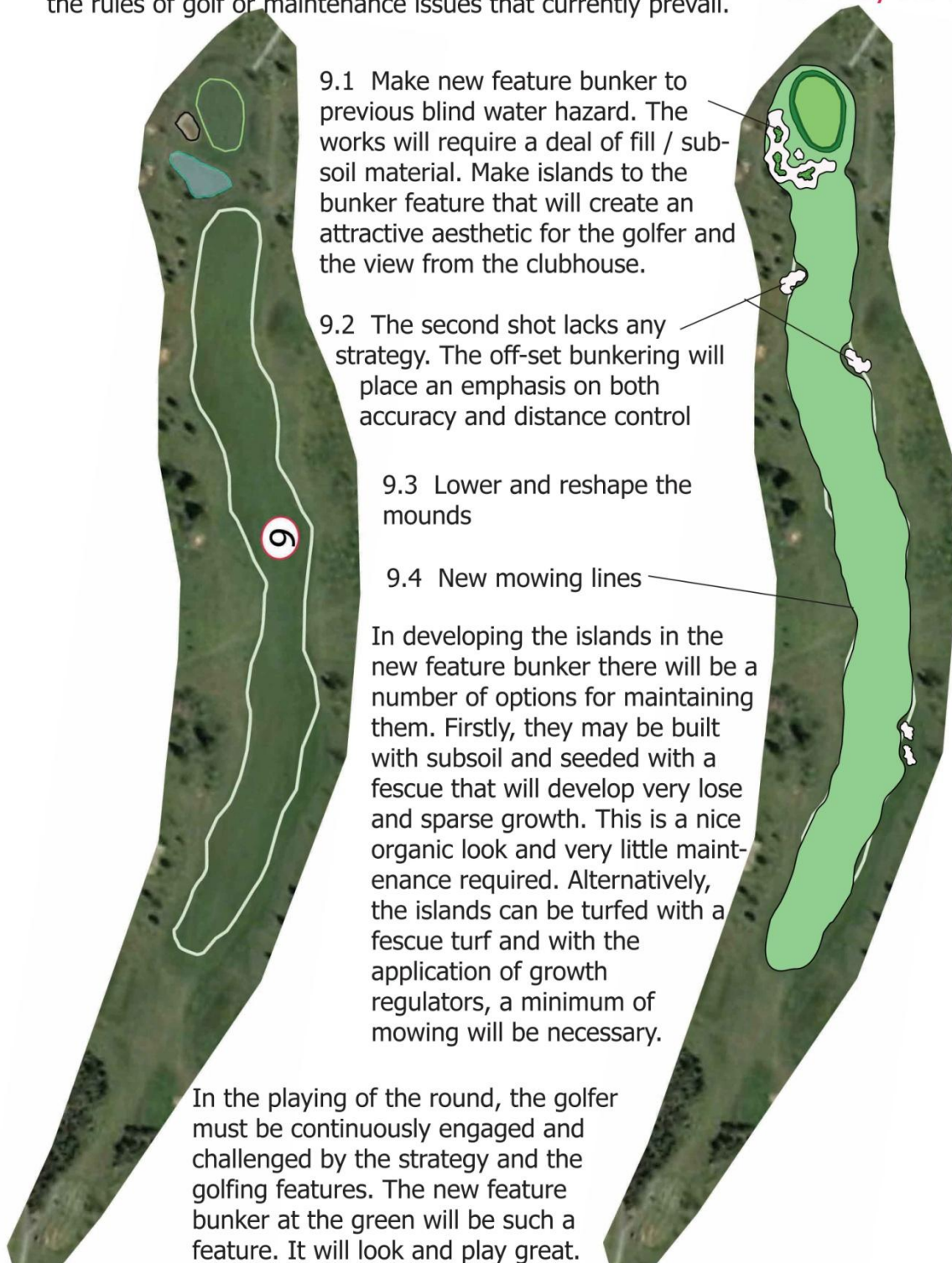
Hole 8  
B. 556y Par 5  
W. 548y Par 5  
L. 461y Par 5





A bland par 5 will become one of the feature holes of the golf course. The problematic and unsightly water feature can be remodelled to make a large feature bunker with islands of native grasses. It will present a risk'n'reward approach shot without the rules of golf or maintenance issues that currently prevail.

Hole 9  
B. 560y Par 5  
W. 550y Par 5  
L. 419y Par 5



Gentle par 4 that sets the golfer off on the second half of the round.

Hole 10  
B. 375y Par 4  
W. 325y Par 4  
L. 318y Par 4



11.1 Excellent par 3 that plays downhill to a nice green complex. However, the surrounds are poor. A remodel of the greenside bunkers and surrounds is recommended. There is a deep (piped) drain along the tree line to the right that can be used as an outlet for the water. The front of the green will be remodelled to create a low area (gully pots) and divert the water and all drainage to the right side. The remodel will allow us to create a better and nicer hole with more balanced bunkering and a much better looking golf hole.



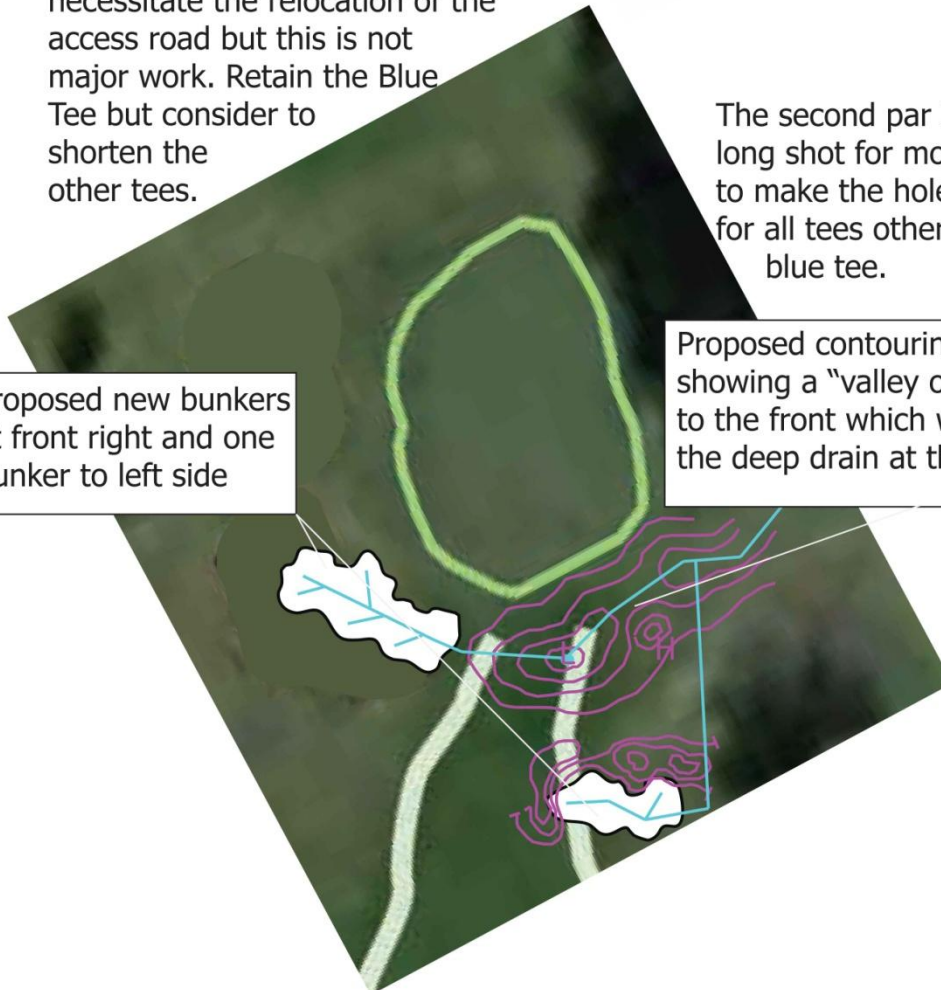
Hole 11  
B. 216y Par 3  
W. 206y Par 3  
L. 191y Par 3

11.2 Consider tee remodel to make the hole to better lengths. This may necessitate the relocation of the access road but this is not major work. Retain the Blue Tee but consider to shorten the other tees.

The second par 3 is another long shot for most. Consider to make the hole shorter for all tees other than the blue tee.

Proposed new bunkers at front right and one bunker to left side

Proposed contouring (magenta) showing a "valley of sin" swale to the front which will drain into the deep drain at the right



A strong par 4 that presents the first of a series of tough and challenging golf holes.

Hole 12  
B. 438y Par 4  
W. 372y Par 4  
L. 326y Par 4





A really good par 4 hole. The angle of the tee shot is very demanding with an emphasis on distance control as well as accuracy.

Hole 13  
B. 395y Par 4  
W. 387y Par 4  
L. 362y Par 4



13.1 New Ladies Tee proposed to allow a tee shot to the left of the tree and that a good shot reaches past the corner of the elbow.



Beautiful golf hole that gives the golfer a physical "breather", playing downhill to a treelined fairway. The tee shot is adequately framed but the green site is very poor. Recommended to remodel the greenside bunkers as well as the front of the green to remedy the water holding issue. Easily done with smart design and reshaping of the work area.

Hole 14  
B. 421y Par 4  
W. 401y Par 4  
L. 304y Par 4



A nice par 3 that has a nice aspect to it playing downhill over the stream feature.

Hole 15  
B. 183y Par 3  
W. 168y Par 3  
L. 110y Par 3



Brilliant par 4 that starts the homeward journey for the golfer. A tough hole that starts to build the rhythm of the round to what should be an exciting finish for the golfer.

Hole 16  
B. 368y Par 4  
W. 361y Par 4  
L. 280y Par 4



16.1 Remodel the greenside bunker to make it more relevant. A common theme of bunkers that sit too far from the playing line. Remodel so that the bunker "interacts" with the green.

16.2 Clear scrub and bamboo from the left side.

16.3 Remove evergreens that are crowding the right side. A common theme where the many evergreen trees are starting to dominate the landscape. Manage as part of a Tree Management Program where native hardwoods only should be planted to replace the non-native and unwanted evergreen trees

16.4 Clear the trees and scrub at the pathway exit from the tees. They are causing light, shade and a claustrophobic feel to a tee shot that is already very demanding. The clearing will not make the tee shot easier, but it will look and "feel" better once cleared.

16.5 Clear some of the dense woodland to the left

16.6 Open up the stream at the back left of the tee to connect to the stream that crosses in front of the 15th green



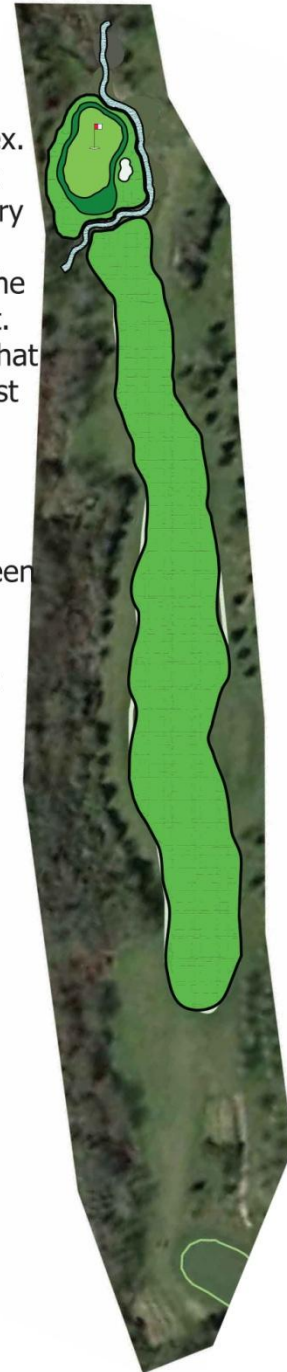
The index 1 hole for Gents and a somewhat "easier" par 5 for the Ladies. The hole is one that attracts much debate. The presence of a water hazard that crosses the line of play will always generate interest. The water hazards in this case are a maintenance issue and not sustainable. They also look unnatural.

Hole 17  
B. 411y Par 4  
W. 404y Par 4  
L. 348y Par 4



17.1 Remodel the entire green complex. The remodel will include the treatment of the water feature. The club should try to retain a water aspect to the hole. I think it adds greatly at the finale to the round, particularly in matchplay format. There are many options but I believe that a simple brook-style stream will be most effective and is, I believe, as the hole was designed at an earlier time. The new green will create a much larger putting green surface, most suitable when approaching the green with a long iron or wood. The collar of the green be so designed to create a run-off towards the water, but not that every shot that is short will end up in the water

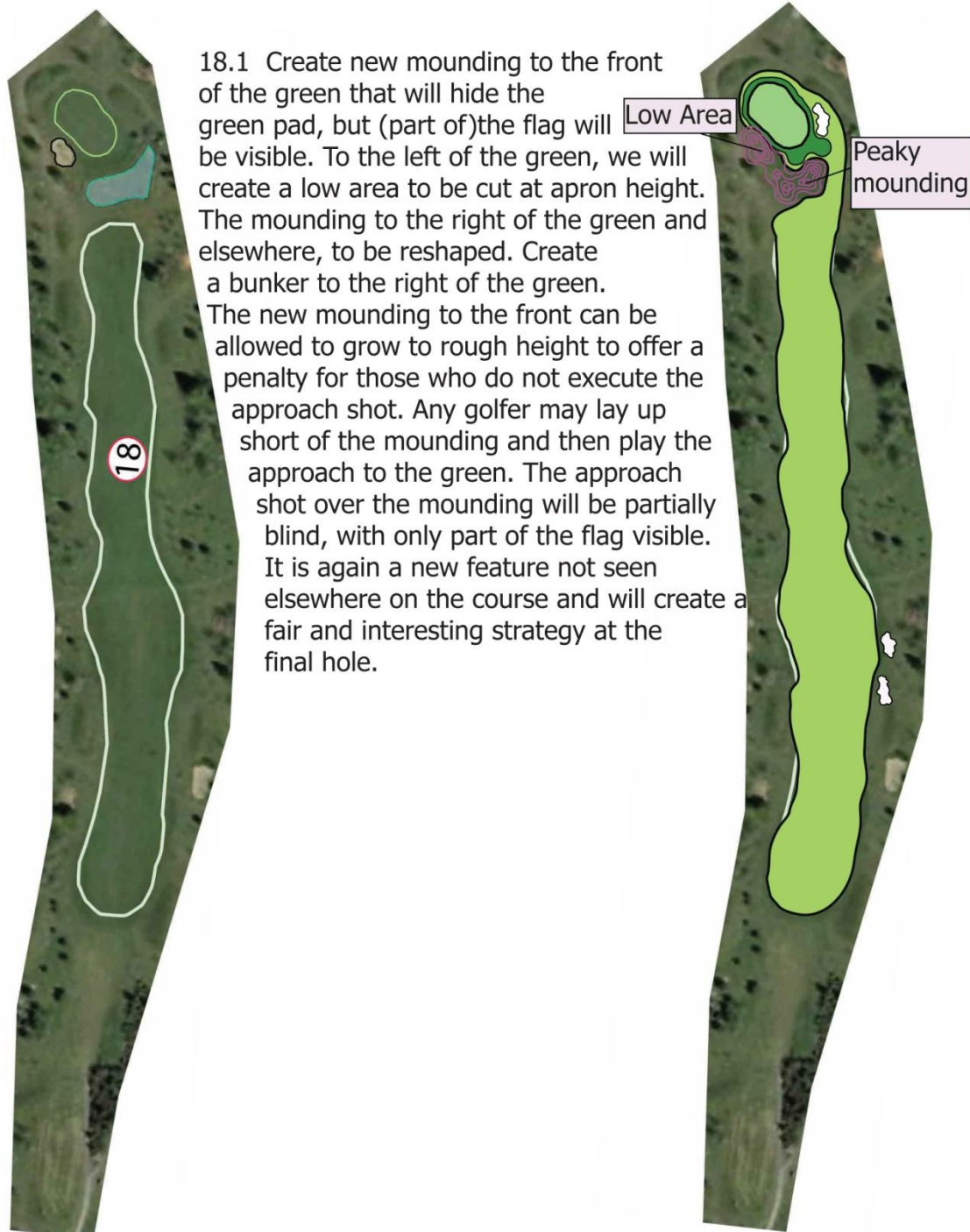
17.2 Manage the evergreen trees





The golfer has reached the climax of the round.  
 The tee shot is bland, the approach shot lacks strategy and  
 the water feature / green complex is very unattractive.  
 The round should build in rhythm to the finishing hole,  
 which should be challenging, fair and aesthetically pleasing.

Hole 18  
 B. 492y Par 5  
 W. 482y Par 5  
 L. 424y Par 5



## 10. Conclusion

I am very pleased to be asked to prepare this document and am delighted to be associated with Kinsale GC. I believe that you have an excellent golf course, that with investment you can create a really strategic, challenging and engaging course. It is my opinion that you have a golf course that can in the future climb the rankings and become one of the finest parkland courses in Ireland.

May I take the opportunity to thank you for the courtesy extended to me during my visits to the club.

*Ken Kearney*

October 2016