



## SEATON CAREW GOLF CLUB

Founded 1874

# Member Q&A Booklet

*22 Holes vs a Permanent 18-Hole Championship Course*

DOCUMENT 2 OF 3

An information pack for members · July 2026

*Part of a three-booklet pack, read alongside [The Case for One Permanent 18-Hole Course \(1 of 3\)](#) and [Phasing & Costings of the Works \(3 of 3\)](#).*

## Introduction

As part of its long-term planning, the Club is considering whether Seaton Carew would be better served by moving from the current 22-hole rotation to one clearly defined, permanent 18-hole championship course.

This booklet explains that proposal in straightforward terms, answers the questions members are most likely to ask, and sets out why the matter is being considered at all. It is not intended to dismiss the Club’s history or to suggest the present structure has no merit. On the contrary, the current model reflects the Club’s long evolution and forms part of Seaton Carew’s character.

The question is whether that structure remains the best one for the Club in modern conditions — having regard to course quality, use of resources, long-term financial sustainability, security of land use, member experience and the future identity of the golf course.

Our aim is simple: to protect the long-term quality, sustainability and standing of the golf course, while acting in the best interests of the membership. This booklet is one of three: the fuller case is set out in The Case for One Permanent 18-Hole Course (Document 1 of 3), and the phasing and full costs of the works in Phasing & Costings of the Works (Document 3 of 3).

## At a glance

### What is being proposed

- ✓ One clearly defined, permanent 18-hole championship course.

### What is not being proposed

- ✓ No loss of land owned by the Club
- ✓ No reduction in our commitment to members
- ✓ No abandonment of the Club’s history
- ✓ No decision without further detail and consultation

## What is the aim?

- Higher and more consistent standards of course presentation.
- Better use of staff, machinery and resources.
- Greater clarity of course identity.
- Stronger long-term planning and sustainability.

## A note on the word “championship”

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In this booklet, “championship” is not used simply to mean harder, longer or more severe. It refers to the overall quality of the golf course: its coherence, presentation, conditioning, strategic interest and ability to stand as a credible venue for important competition.

By that measure, Seaton Carew has long been regarded as a championship course, as shown by its place in county golf and its long record of hosting regional, national and international championships.

## The key principle

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This proposal is not about losing something for the sake of change. It is about considering whether the Club could improve what it already has by focusing its planning, maintenance and investment on one defined principal course.

**The central question:** *Would Seaton Carew now be better served by one clearly defined, consistently maintained and strategically coherent 18-hole course than by continuing with multiple recognised layouts across a 22-hole site?*

## Why this question is being asked

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A fair question is why the Club should consider this now. The answer is not that the present structure has suddenly become unworkable, nor that its history lacks value. It is that golf clubs now operate in very different conditions from those in which many of Seaton Carew’s current arrangements developed. Labour and materials are more expensive, environmental obligations are greater, members expect higher and more consistent standards, and clubs are judged more heavily on the clarity and quality of the course they present.

In that context, it is reasonable to ask whether maintaining several recognised routings across a wider footprint continues to represent the best use of the Club’s land, labour and resources.

## Common questions

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### **“Are we losing holes or value?”**

No land is being lost through this proposal, and the intention is not to reduce value to members.

The purpose of a permanent 18-hole layout would be to concentrate attention on the best and most suitable golfing ground, so the principal course can be maintained and presented to the highest possible standard. The argument is one of quality and focus, rather than loss.

Members are entitled to know exactly how the wider site would be treated, what role any holes outside the principal 18 would have, and how the Club would keep the overall value of membership strong.

### **“Are visitors being prioritised?”**

No. Members remain the priority.

Visitor income matters because it helps support course improvements, infrastructure investment and long-term financial stability — all of which benefit members. The purpose of improving the clarity and quality of the course is not to favour visitors over members, but to strengthen the Club for the membership as a whole.

A clearer principal course may also improve the quality of visitor demand and the value generated per visitor, while still allowing the Club to protect member access and tee availability.

### **“Will my membership become cheaper?”**

Not directly — that is not the argument being made.

The more realistic benefit is that a defined principal course should allow resources to be used more effectively, investment to be targeted more clearly, and long-term planning to be undertaken with greater confidence. In practical terms, that means better value from the money members already pay, rather than an automatic cut in subscriptions.

### **“Will we lose variety?”**

There would be less variety in the sense of having several recognised routings in active use. That is true.

However, variety in golf does not come only from changing course names or routings. It also comes from wind, weather, firmness, pin positions, set-up, competition format and seasonal playing conditions. Most leading courses operate as one settled layout while still offering a rich and varied playing experience.

The real question is whether the variety currently offered by multiple routings outweighs the benefits of one stronger, clearer and better-presented principal course.

### **“Isn't 22 holes part of our identity?”**

It is certainly part of the Club's history, and that should be respected. However, history and day-to-day operating model are not the same thing. The Club's long-term success depends not only on what has evolved over time, but on whether the present structure continues to deliver the best golf course and the strongest future for members.

A permanent 18-hole layout would not mean ignoring the Club's past. The history of the Old, New, Brabazon, Micklem and Bishop layouts could continue to be recognised and displayed within the clubhouse through historic plans, photographs, competition records and a written timeline. Equally, any permanent layout would be designed to preserve and highlight the defining character of the course itself — its best golfing ground, natural features, strategic interest and historic qualities — so the essence of Seaton Carew is not lost, but more clearly expressed.

## **“Will course condition improve?”**

That is the intention, but it should be expressed carefully. A permanent 18-hole layout would not improve the course by magic. Better outcomes still depend on sound planning, investment and execution.

What such a layout should do is allow the Club to concentrate greenkeeping effort, machinery time and capital on one clearly defined course, rather than dispersing those finite resources across a broader and more complex footprint. That gives a stronger opportunity to improve consistency, surface quality, presentation and long-term standards.

## **“Why does land ownership matter?”**

Some of the current holes sit on land the Club does not own. This does not make the present arrangement unworkable, and it should not be presented as though the Club faces an immediate problem. When considering the long-term future of the course, however, security of control is plainly relevant: it is generally easier to plan, invest and think strategically where the Club has greater certainty over the land its principal course depends on.

The good news is that the position over the road is stronger than many assume, and the proposed 18-hole course would actually reduce our reliance on it. The full picture is set out under “Beyond the road” below.

## **“Is this just about marketing?”**

No. Marketing benefits may arise from one clearer, more recognisable principal course, but they are not the main reason the question is being asked. The key drivers are better maintenance focus, clearer planning, more effective cost control, improved safety, stronger strategic certainty and a more coherent long-term model for the golf course. Marketing is one supporting benefit of clarity, not the whole case.

## **“What will it cost, and will the course be a building site?”**

Members are entitled to see the figures and the disruption before forming a view, so both are set out in full in the companion booklet, Phasing & Costings of the Works (Document 3 of 3).

In short: the works would be carried out in three phases over roughly two to three years, and they have been designed around the golf, not the other way round. Through the main phases the course stays in play — the Micklem and Brabazon layouts carry the golf — so members should not expect to play a building site. The companion booklet gives the phase-by-phase detail, the timescale and the full reconciled cost.

## **“Can I ask questions or give feedback in person?”**

Yes. As well as emailing questions in advance and hearing them answered at the presentation, there will be three informal clubhouse drop-in sessions where you can talk things through face to face with the Chairman of Greens and the Course Manager.

- Friday 17 July — 9:00 to 11:00am
- Thursday 23 July — 5:00 to 7:00pm
- Wednesday 29 July — 2:00 to 4:00pm

There is no need to book — just come along to whichever session suits you. They are a relaxed chance to ask anything, seek clarification, or talk through any part of the proposal before the survey opens.

## “Is this decision already made?”

No. No final decision has been taken, and none will be made without proper discussion and a genuine say for members. This pack sets out the case, answers the most common questions, and now also provides the phasing and full costs of the works — so members can consider the whole picture, not a partial one.

Any significant change of this kind would ultimately be made by the members themselves, in the proper way, through the Club’s usual decision-making process — and only once all the feedback is in and everything has been fully discussed. The path for having your say is set out under “What happens next.”

## Beyond the road

Over many years, members have understandably raised questions about the four holes over the road — the land the Club uses but does not own — and the arrangements under which we occupy it. A common worry is whether moving to a permanent 18 could put that land at risk: the “use it or lose it” fear. A full review has been carried out, and our Trustee has summarised the position in plain terms.

*We use the land over the road under a long-standing licence — around forty years old, on strong terms, and with no end date. We do not own it, but we do not need to. In practice the arrangement can continue indefinitely, for as long as the Club pays its way and plays by the rules.*

*Importantly, nobody can simply squeeze us out. The major landowner, PD Ports, cannot end the arrangement at will, and Natural England’s own interest in the area sits behind our golf rights rather than over them. The land is locked into a nature reserve, so there is no realistic pressure to put it to another use.*

*We also looked at whether we could improve on what we have. We cannot. Buying the land is not on offer, and the only “upgrade” anyone could give us — a formal lease — would cost more and, unlike now, come with an expiry date. The sensible course is to carry on exactly as we are.*

*And here is the part that matters most for this proposal: the new 18-hole plan makes our position over the road stronger, not weaker. It reduces our reliance on that land from four holes to three, with a fallback routing ready to use should the land ever be lost. In short — the land we don’t own is held on better terms than it looks, nobody is likely to disturb it, and the new layout leaves us less dependent on it than we are today.*

**Alex Shaw**

*Club Manager, Seaton Carew Golf Club*

The key point for members is this: the present arrangement is not an immediate crisis, and the Club can continue as it is. Equally, when planning for the long term, stronger control and greater certainty over the land

are an advantage — and the proposed course moves us in exactly that direction. The question is one of long-term strategy and security, not present alarm.

## What this could mean for members

If the Club were ultimately to adopt a permanent 18-hole course, the intended benefits for members would include:

- a clearer and more settled principal course;
- enhanced site security;
- more consistent course presentation;
- better use of club resources;
- stronger long-term planning;
- improved clarity of identity; and
- a more focused basis for future investment.

These are intended benefits, not claims to be accepted without evidence. They will be supported by proper detail before any final decision is sought.

## Strategic benefits at a glance

<p><b>Resource efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff, machinery and materials concentrated on the principal course.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Operational focus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearer planning and a more structured basis for improvement works.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Land security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced reliance, where possible, on land outside full club control.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Financial sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A stronger basis for cost control, prioritised investment and planning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Member experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clearer, more consistent and more coherent golfing product.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer crossing points, routing conflicts and unnecessary complexity.</li> </ul>

## A balanced decision

This is an important subject, and it is right that members weigh it carefully. There are understandable concerns around tradition, variety and identity. Those concerns are valid and should not be dismissed — the existing structure has a long history and, for many members, genuine affection attached to it.

However, the key question remains: does one clearly defined, well-presented and strategically coherent championship course offer a better long-term future for the Club than the continued operation of multiple recognised layouts across a 22-hole site? That is the issue on which the Club must make a careful, well-evidenced decision.

## What happens next

This is a genuine consultation, and we want every member to be well informed before they are asked what they think. Here is the path, step by step.

<p><b>1 July 2026</b></p>	<p>The full information pack — three booklets: The Case for One Permanent 18-Hole Course, Member Q&amp;A, and Phasing &amp; Costings of the Works — is published to members via the website, email and the club notice boards.</p>
<p><b>By 10 July 2026</b></p>	<p>Members wishing to attend the presentation should confirm with the Club Manager, as capacity is limited to 200. Members are also invited to email any questions on the proposal — design, phasing or costs — to <a href="mailto:greens@seatoncarewgolfclub.co.uk">greens@seatoncarewgolfclub.co.uk</a>. Sending questions in advance means each one can be answered fully, with common themes grouped together.</p>
<p><b>Mon 13 July 2026, 6:30pm</b></p>	<p>Member presentation evening at Hartlepool College of Further Education. Tom Mackenzie of Mackenzie &amp; Ebert presents the proposed design and answers questions on routing and design. The Greens Committee answers all other submitted questions, including phasing and costs. The evening will be recorded.</p>
<p><b>Shortly after</b></p>	<p>The Secretary will email all members a link to the recording, together with a written summary of the questions and answers.</p>
<p><b>Clubhouse drop-ins</b></p>	<p>The Chairman of Greens and the Course Manager will be in the clubhouse to answer questions in person — Friday 17 July (9:00–11:00am), Thursday 23 July (5:00–7:00pm) and Wednesday 29 July (2:00–4:00pm).</p>
<p><b>1–14 August 2026</b></p>	<p>A short, anonymous member survey (a SurveyMonkey link, emailed by the Secretary) to gauge members’ support for moving to a permanent 18-hole course.</p>

**In due course**

Any significant change of this kind would ultimately be decided by the members themselves, in the proper way, through the Club's usual decision-making process — and only once all the feedback is in and everything has been fully discussed.

## **Final message**

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This proposal is about stewardship, not fashion. It is about asking whether the Club can better protect its course, improve its quality, strengthen its long-term position and serve future generations of members by focusing on one principal layout.

No final view should be formed without the necessary supporting information. But it is right that the question is asked, and that members can weigh it carefully. We encourage everyone to read all three booklets, watch the presentation (live or recorded), send in any questions, and take part in the survey when it opens.