



A Feasibility Study on the Appointment of a General Manager to Rosslare Golf Club

Background

At the AGM in January 2021 the following motion was put to the membership:

*That the Management team of Rosslare Golf Club during 2021 conduct a feasibility study on the appointment of a Club General Manager to manage the Club's Administration and Operational Management in conjunction with the Club Management team. This feasibility study will be furnished to the Club members before our next Club AGM. **Proposed by: Ted Tierney** **Seconded by: Brian Hall O'Mahony***

In proposing the motion Ted Tierney said, "that now the new Management Structure will significantly move the Club forward, but this should be in tandem with the appointment of a Secretary Manager both for accountability and the daily management of key staff being of paramount importance. We are putting this motion forward, not to appoint a Sec-Man this year, but to conduct a feasibility study to that appointment. This study will be fed back to the members this calendar year."

After some discussion the motion was amended as follows:

That the MC of Rosslare Golf Club during 2021 consider a feasibility study on the appointment of a club General Manager to manage the clubs Administration and Operational Management in conjunction with the Club Management team. This feasibility study will be furnished to the club members before our next club AGM.

This was proposed and seconded and passed by the membership.



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Overview

Golf clubs have traditionally been managed by a Secretary Manager, the annually appointed Club Captain and the elected committee, or put another way – a mixed group of passionate, varied professions, knowledgeable volunteers who are all replaced every few years.

The golf club has changed, it is now seen as a business, and it needs to be operated that way. More clubs are now employing a General Manager (GM) whose role is the day-to-day management of golf operations, a clubhouse experience, the financial management and implementing the requests of club officials. This allows the officials to focus on the future strategy of the club and to enjoy their own membership of the club.

Rosslare Golf Club has not had a GM since 2010. Following the departure of the GM in that year the running of the Club was undertaken by the Club Committee, led by the Men's Captain, and supported by a myriad of Sub-Committees. The implementation of the Committee's decisions and instructions was left in the main to the Hon Secretary. This involved a huge time commitment on behalf of the Hon Secretary who had to adjust and work with a new Captain and new Committee members every 12 months. The role of the Hon Secretary was not only time consuming but required a huge amount of dedication.

As Captain's and Committees changed so too did priorities. Medium to long-term projects often fell through the cracks simply because there was no one to drive them. Committees found it extremely difficult or impossible to determine what was truly best for the entire club over the long run. Prior to the establishment of the Management Committee in January 2021 (comprising of eight members) past Club Committees were made up of 16 members.

The Rosslare Golf Club Strategic Development Plan was launched in September 2021. The Mission Statement sets out the approach to reaching the Club's objectives

'Rosslare Golf Club will provide a first-class golfing experience for all its members and visitors in a friendly, inclusive and relaxed environment. Our Links will be maintained consistent with the principals of our desire for excellence, best practice standards and our own unique golfing heritage. We will encourage sporting and social participation by all our members, their guests and our visitors. We will deliver excellence in all our operations and encourage co-operation with our local community for our mutual benefit. Rosslare Golf Club will provide high quality facilities for all users of the club. It will provide all ongoing training and staff development required making it a great place to work for our staff.'

No one can argue that the Rosslare Golf Club saved money over the past 11 years by not hiring a GM. But it can be argued that this saving has, without doubt, come at the cost of missed opportunities for revenue generation, efficiencies and other cost savings. While the new management structure has made it easier to make and implement decisions, it is still made up of volunteers and none can give a whole-time commitment to projects or the running of the Club.



Rosslare Golf Club, founded in 1905, is a big club both in terms of members and reputation. It offers 30 holes and year-round golf. The appointment of a talented, knowledgeable and skilled GM could and should be the catalyst to drive it forward in these challenging times. A GM should ensure that the Club is proactive rather than reactive. According to the Irish Golf & Club Managers Association (IGCMA) 75% of the Top 100 Golf Clubs in Ireland have a GM. The association reports that since the beginning of the year there has been a huge demand to recruit GMs from Golf Clubs who have either never had a GM or who dispensed with one.

The Pros

- A much-improved experience for members in the medium-term through better delivery of golf, catering and clubhouse facilities.
- With a (GM), the Club should have better financial controls and more consistently applied policies, rules, regulations and procedures, applied equally without fear or favour to all members.
- A clear focus on driving revenue streams i.e., Visitors, Societies, Corporate etc
- Savings should be generated because of increased operating efficiencies and better controls.
- According to the IGCMA a golf club manager should pay for him or herself within 18/24 months.
- A GM will provide leadership, direction and guidance to all staff, ensuring the Club will have a more cohesive and effective leadership team.
- An effective GM can locate and hire staff whose professional skills and individual personalities mesh with the established goals of the entire Club and aggregate talents of the staff.
- In collaboration with the Chair of Marketing the GM will improve communication within the entire membership.
- A GM will ensure continuity in all aspects of the Club's operations which should improve significantly.
- A GM will be able to handle the transition of and induction of new Committee members when the time comes.
- The GM will work closely with the Management Committee who will act as a Board of Directors. He/she will also work with the Men's and Ladies Club Committees.

The Cons

- The cost – an experienced and talented GM will cost at least €70,000 per annum.
- Despite following a broad approach in identifying potential candidates there is no guarantee that we will be successful in attracting the right fit. However, the interview panel can ensure a successful outcome.
- Managing a sporting club can be a danger-laden occupation for a GM and for the club that employs him/her. The relationship between a paid employee and volunteers can sometimes be difficult and unless managed can create upheaval for both sides. The soft skills of the successful candidate are as important as his/her hard skills.



- A manager is not just for Christmas. There needs to be acceptance of the role, the surrendering of previously held responsibilities by committee personnel, and the trust in the appointment, to deliver on the strategy and direction as laid down by the Management Committee.
- Failure to empower and support him/her in the role can lead to difficulties.

What will the GM do?

A GM has multiple key roles which typically include:

- Working with the Management Committee, Sub-Committees, Men's Club and Ladies Club Committees and individual members.
- Grow revenues – Membership sales, Green Fees, Societies, Bar & Catering, Functions
- Working with the MC in executing the Club's Business Plan and Strategic Vision.
- Solid financial stewardship; working with the Hon Treasurer on annual and long-term budgets, capital and future capital planning.
- Managing all staff, including recruitment, retention and training; implementing effective working practices and performance management systems.
- Working with the Links Superintendent and the Chair of Greens.
- Administration, teambuilding, communication, external marketing and social media.
- Club culture, leadership, visibility.
- Kitchen, dining and beverage service. Ensuring excellent customer service and adherence to all regulations.
- Legal issues, Health & Safety.

The Candidate

The successful candidate must have an appreciation of golf and its traditions in a private members club, act as an ambassador for the club, providing a warm courteous and professional welcome to members, visitors and societies. It is important that Rosslare's GM has a background in raising revenues – many GMs particularly in the Dublin region do not focus on raising subscription revenues as they have huge waiting lists.

The ideal candidate will have:

- Proven managerial experience and an understanding of day-to-day business administration including HR responsibilities such as recruitment, appraisals, objective setting, training and development.
- Commercial awareness of running a business, analytical and problem-solving abilities.
- The Club is a seven-day operation, and the GM will be required to work on a flexible basis to suit the activities of the Club.
- Hands-on in planning, organising and managing a range of events including promotional, business and social events held at the Club.
- Financially literate in budgeting, revenue forecasting & marketing strategy planning.
- Proficient with business accounting software packages.
- Customer service experience, client-centric approach.



- Flexible approach to working hours with the ability to work under pressure.
- Approachable with excellent interpersonal, oral and written communication skills.
- IT skills: Computer/software literate. Extensive experience of Microsoft office products including Word, Outlook Excel and PowerPoint.
- Proven experience in sales, business development and in marketing through various means such as social media platforms, promoting the Club to drive tourism, initiatives for membership retention and attracting prospective members and visitors.

The Club Management Team Option

In recent years a number of golf clubs have brought in specialist companies to run their club. Initially golf clubs outsourced the greenkeeping duties to companies such as Carr Golf, Synergy Golf but these companies have now moved in-house to run the operational side of clubs. Carr Golf manages 14 clubs including Seapoint and Blainroe. What this option offers is a team of experienced people running a club rather than one experienced individual. It would be more expensive. This option is gathering traction, but the jury is out as to whether this business model is for the long term.

Summary

In summary, the Management Committee is of the view that the Club would benefit by the hiring of a GM to drive the Club forward and assist in achieving its aims. Therefore, at its first meeting in January 2022 the MC will select and appoint an experienced sub-committee, agree terms of reference and empower them to seek out, interview and recommend a General Manager. It is hoped that the successful candidate will begin work in April.

Michael Roche
Chairman
Rosslare Golf Club

December 2021