



Title of Report:	153rd Open Golf Championship – Project Management
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	19 November 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity
Outcome	Promoting the Borough as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit
Lead Officer	Director of Leisure and Development

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	30 September 2025

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£365,000
Included in Current Year Estimates	NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on Council's involvement in The 153rd Open Championship in 2025 and to seek approval for Council to contribute to the project management of this event, maximising the benefit for the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.

2.0 Background

2.1 At the full Council meeting held on 5 December 2023, the Executive Director Championships and the Director of Public Affairs Royal and Ancient (R&A) presented to Council and confirmed that The Open would return in 2025.

The 153rd Open Golf Championship has been planned for Portrush from 13 to 20 July 2025, 6 years after Shane Lowry's victory at Royal Portrush in 2019.

2.2 With 238,000 tickets issued in 2019, The Open returned to Northern Ireland after 68 years and was considered to be exceptionally successful, providing direct and indirect benefits for the Council area and beyond. Tourism Northern Ireland stated that the advertising equivalent value equated to £23.7 million for Northern Ireland golf tourism, monitored in media coverage across the island of Ireland and internationally. Northern Ireland also gained £37.3 million in destination marketing benefit from over 5,400 hrs of global television coverage (source: Sheffield Hallam).

Key economic metrics include £45 million worth of economic activity of which £26 million directly benefited the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area.

In 2019 Council had a significant role working with the R&A and other key stakeholders to provide operational support ensuring successful delivery of the event. Experience and learnings from 2019 have been useful in identifying adjustments to delivery mechanisms for 2025.

3.0 Delivery Structure

3.1 The R&A in conjunction with many stakeholders, including Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Officers and Tourism NI, have developed an Event Group Architecture which provides structure to facilitate the implementation of the event planning process, maximising benefits and minimising negative impacts for the local community.

3.2 This structure ensures a coordinated approach to the delivery, outlining planning and response roles for key partners and ensuring communication across all elements of the event planning and delivery process. The Multi-Agency Event Planning Group Architecture is attached at **Annex A**.

4.0 Council's Role

4.1 In 2019 Council established key aims and objectives to ensure the full benefit from The 148th Open was maximised. The aim was to ensure that the visitors to The Open, including golfers, support teams, attendees at the event, visitors to our area and local residents and businesses had a positive experience.

Key objectives include:

- Creating significant economic impact activity.
- Reinforcing the principle that the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area should host major events.
- Reinforcing the message that the area is a good place to work, live and visit.

- Showcasing sport as a means to stimulate and activate health and wellbeing in the community.

5.0 Activities to Date

- 5.1 Council Officers have been engaged with the R&A, TNI and other key partners over the last 12 months, with planning for traffic and transport through the sub-group (Council Chair and Secretariat). Representation has also taken place on the Multi-Agency Gold and Multi-Agency Silver groups and have initiated early informal meetings regarding the Tourism and Promotion Sub-Group (branding and animation), the Safety, Security and Contingency Sub-Group, the Local Communities and Business Engagement Sub-Group and the Marketing and Communications Sub- Group.
- 5.2 The Tourism and Recreation remit has acted as the Council's point of contact to date, with Council's Senior Responsible Officer assigned to the Director of Leisure and Development. An internal trawl of Council is underway to secure an Open Golf Championship Project Manager for 2025. This role will act to coordinate and project manage Council's wider involvement in event preparation and delivery.

6.0 Event Overview

- 6.1 The Royal Portrush Golf Club will host The 153rd Open Golf Championship from 13 – 20 July 2025.

This decision by the R&A was due to the success of the 2019 Open and the support shown by partner agencies and the Club. The 2019 Championship attracted new record attendance for this event, outside of St Andrews, with 238,000 attendees. Whilst the practice and main event occurs over 7 days, the infrastructure build both within the grounds of the course and the surrounding areas starts well in advance of July.

- 6.2 Tickets for The Open have been in high demand and it is likely that the numbers will exceed the 238,000 tickets for 2019 and provides an excellent opportunity for both The Open Championship and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to benefit from the number of visitors to the area and the high media profile globally.

Key benefits include:

- Increased number of day and overnight visitors, along with increased visitor spend.
- Global media coverage of the area, encouraging future visits and expenditure.
- Employment and procurement from local suppliers and services.
- Profiling of an elite sport within the local community.
- Community pride.
- Legacy projects and infrastructure investment opportunities.

7.0 Proposed Council Involvement

- 7.1 Within the complex structure of operations, with many stakeholders as detailed in **Annex A**, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council will be required to play a significant role in event planning and delivery.
- 7.2 Subject to approval, Council will be fully responsible or greatly involved in a number of functions. The majority of these work requirements will take place outside of the event site, ie Royal Portrush Golf Club, however involvement will be required particularly around the technical and regulatory remit for licencing, safety and security and the coordination of the traffic and transport role.
- 7.3 Key functional areas that will take place outside the event area include:

(i) Local Communities and Business Engagement

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is being asked to take the lead on local business and community engagement, with a view to ensuring that the town's businesses benefit before, during and after the event takes place.

Coverage on media channels will promote the town as being 'Open for Business'. Council will deliver additional activities throughout the town during the week of The Open by way of events and public space animation. A regular contact forum with local businesses will be established to assist with planning for the event.

(ii) Tourism and Promotion

Sitting separately from communications and the national marketing function, the key role of the Tourism Promotion grouping is to ensure that Portrush and the wider Causeway Coast and Glens are fully associated with The 153rd Open Golf and integrated as an extension of the event.

Key themes and roles for this remit include:

- Area dressing, branding etc to create a sense of character and personality that complements The 153rd Open.
- Deliver event and animation activities outside of the main event space for the benefit of visitors, the local community and businesses.
- It is proposed that local communications and PR is included within this function (in 2019 this was a separate working group).

(iii) Presentation and Service Continuity

The function will be to ensure the physical presentation of Portrush is at its best. Deep-cleansing, minor repair works, floral displays and minor improvement projects will ensure that the town 'shows its best side' for maximising the opportunities from media exposure. This remit also factors for ensuring continuity of Council services for residents and businesses including waste operations, environmental health activities and emergency planning requirements. In 2019 a working group existed for Portrush regeneration and it is proposed that for 2025 any similar types of project work will be assigned to the Presentation and Service Continuity groups.

(iv) Traffic and Transport

This group is Chaired and administered by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. Planning for the traffic and transport requirements is continuing with a number of bodies collectively working to create traffic and transport and parking system that allows for ease of movement to The 153rd Open in 2025. It also aims to minimise the impact on Portrush and retain normal traffic flows where possible.

Key stakeholders involved in this grouping along with Council include the R&A, Department for Infrastructure (Roads), the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue service, Translink, PSNI and Tourism NI.

Key themes include:

- Maximising the use of public transport.
- To provide a Park and Ride infrastructure to meet a capacity in excess of 11,000 vehicles.
- Provide reserved parking for staff and contractors.
- Ensure the local and wider road network facilitates event traffic.

Working groups not assigned to a Council lead include:

- The Safety, Security and Contingency Sup-group.
- Medical Sub-group.
- Marshalling Sub-Group.
- Technical and Regularity Sub-group.
- Marketing and Communications Sub-group.

Council representation and contribution may be required for the above sub-groups. In addition there is also a recruitment and skills grouping that Council will have involvement in.

8.0 Governance

8.1 The governance of the working groups will sit with the respective departments and directorates. Council's Open Golf Championship Project Manager will provide the core function of coordination and administration between the working groups, reporting through the Director for Leisure and Development.

A Report will be brought to Council in the coming months detailing the work activities planned for each of the Council-led working groups, providing an overview of the ongoing planning for The Open and confirming cost requirements in terms of budget.

8.2 Golf Project Manager

In 2019 Council employed a Golf Project Manager to act as the coordinating link between all of the activities connected to the Open Golf planning and delivery, where Council had direct or indirect involvement. From November 2023 until September 2024, the Tourism Event Coordinator acted up for this role. Since September the Head of Service and Director have been fulfilling this remit. Due to the breadth and the high level of commitment required for this remit, it is recommended that a dedicated resource is once again sought for this role. Officers have initiated an internal Council trawl to invite applications for fulfilment of this post. The estimate cost to Council is £60,000.

9.0 Budget

9.1 Based on the experience of 2019, Council Officers have estimated a financial contribution from Council of £365,000 is required.

Anticipated workstreams include:

(i) Local Communities and Business Engagement

- Business development clinics.
- Business toolkits.
- World Host and other related training.
- Social media programme for business.
- Community engagement events.

Estimated resource requirement - £50,000.

(ii) Tourism and Promotion

- Static branding on approach roads to the event.
- Destination branding throughout the resort and neighbouring towns and villages etc.
- Animation and event activities throughout the week of the golf event.

- Fanzone, street entertainment, liaison with business.

Estimated resource requirement - £85,000.

This excludes any potential contribution from TNI to assist with branding and animation.

(iii) Presentation and Service Continuity

- Environmental Health requirements.
- Legislative requirements.
- Waste and Operations.
- Estates maintenance, repair and logistics.
- Estates grounds and presentation.

Estimated resource requirement - £160,000.

(v) Traffic and Transport

- Associated costs with alterations to Council's estate to facilitate transfer of lands to Council from R&A.

Estimated resource requirement - £10,000.

(vi) Golf Project Manager

Estimated resource requirement - £60,000.

This does not include the opportunity cost of the transfer of Council lands to the R&A or lost earnings from car parks required by R&A as part of the infrastructure set up.

10.0 Next Steps

- 10.1 Subject to Elected Members approval, Officers will fully activate the above working groups (with the exception of the Traffic and Transport which has been operational since November 2023, a necessary requirement to facilitate the planning period).

11.0 Recommendation

The Leisure and Development Committee is asked to recommend the allocation of resources to facilitate the request for cooperation and assistance from the R&A and stakeholder organisations. This will involve the formalisation of working groups and an agreed minimum budget allocation of £365,000.00 based on initial estimates at this point in time.

Multi Agency Event Planning Groups Group Architecture – Royal Portrush 2025

**Multi-Agency GOLD
Strategic Intentions**

- Support the R&A in hosting a successful 153rd Open at Royal Portrush Golf Club
- Oversee the implementation of all event plans and arrangements developed for the 153rd Open
- Oversee the implementation of event plans and arrangements to maximise positive impacts and minimise negative impacts for local communities and businesses that may be impacted by the event
- Oversee that effective arrangements are implemented to minimise and adequately control safety risk exposure for all event staff and visitors during the planning, promotion and delivery of the event

Chair: [Redacted] *Tourism Northern Ireland – Chief Executive Officer*

**Multi-Agency SILVER / [Safety Advisory Group (SAG)]
Terms of Reference**

- Ensure a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the 153rd Open
- Ensure the safety of event staff and visitors to the event and its environs
- Outline the planning and response roles and responsibilities of those partners involved in the planning and organisation of the event
- Receive regular reports from all sub-groups and ensure that appropriate measures have been put in place to address all issues and risks
- Prepare reports to the Multi-agency Gold group, escalating concerns and risks as required

Chair: [Redacted] *Tourism Northern Ireland*

TableTop Exercise Sub-Group
Chair: [Redacted] *Director – Operations, The R&A*

**Safety, Security & Contingency Sub-Group
Terms of Reference:**

- Work as a group to develop a co-ordinated & effective multi-agency plan with regard to the overall safety and security of the event.
- Prior to & during the event, co-ordinate tasking in respect of the following:
 - Command & Control.
 - Communications & related IT.
 - Intelligence for event & on course management.
 - Venue and event infrastructure safety and security.
 - 72nd hole arrangements.
 - VIP and player safety and security
- Prepare Contingency Plans detailing the procedures for activation and implementation of the multi-agency arrangements required to effectively respond to an emergency connected with The Open.
- Keep up to date with and follow Government Policy and Operational Guidance in relation to COVID measures.
- To be made aware of and consider the response to freedom of information requests in relation to safety, security and contingencies

Chair: *Chief Supt. J. [Redacted], Police Service Northern Ireland*

**Traffic & Transport Sub Group
Terms of Reference:**

- Develop and co-ordinate:
- For inclusion in the Event Plan, an effective traffic and transport management plan for the 153rd Open taking cognisance of ongoing day-to-day activities in local communities
- The implementation of infrastructure and service improvements to provide a satisfactory public transfer offering to customers of the event
- The provision of sufficient car parks with safe access arrangements to meet the needs of customers of the event
- Link with the media and communications sub-group on event public information including arrangements for public and private transport

Chair: [Redacted] *Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council – Transportation Network Manager*

**Local Communities & Business Engagement Sub-Group
Terms of Reference:**

- Develop a plan to raise awareness for local communities and businesses around the 153rd Open
- Develop a plan to engage with local communities and businesses to promote opportunities associated with the 153rd Open
- Link with the Media and Public Information sub-group to ensure that all public information about the event is readily available to the public

Chair: [Redacted], *Causeway Coast & Glens*

**Technical & Regulatory Sub-Group
Terms of Reference:**

- To ensure that appropriate technical and legislative standards are observed in the provision of infrastructure and associated services/utilities for the 153rd Open
- To monitor that appropriate consideration for risk and risk mitigation measures are adopted through the planning for event infrastructure.
- To oversee the infrastructure provisions are delivered to appropriate standards to help ensure delivery of a safe event
- To monitor the use and integrity of event infrastructure during the build-up, event delivery and post event take-down phases to ensure that it remains suitable and to provide guidance/direction in order to overcome any issues that arise with the event infrastructure
- To oversee that all appropriate legislation; technical standards and applicable bye-laws etc is referenced in the planning and operational delivery phases for the event.

Chair: [Redacted], *Event Safety Officer, (Fairhurst)*

**Marshalling Sub-Group
Terms of Reference:**

- Develop a co-ordinated and effective Marshalling Plan with regard to the movement of competitors, event staff and spectators around the venue.
- Develop and oversee the delivery of appropriate operational plans for marshalling The Open including ensuring the appropriate identification, selection and briefing/training of those who are to act as volunteer Marshals
- Work as a group prior to and during the event to ensure that event specific marshalling arrangements appropriately dovetail with operational plans developed by other event sub-groups

Chair: [Redacted] *he R&A Chief Marshal*

**Tourism & Promotion Sub-Group
Terms of Reference:**

- Develop a tourism plan to maximise the opportunities presented by the 153rd Open
- Link with the Media and Public Information sub-group and Local Communities and Business sub-group to ensure that all information and benefits about the event is promoted

Chair: [Redacted] *Causeway Coast & Glens*

**MarCommunications Sub-Group
Terms of Reference:**

- Develop and deliver a local, national and international communication plan for the 153rd Open
- Develop a media plan for ensuring the public are kept updated on all aspects of the 153rd Open
- Develop and coordinate a multi-agency media and public information protocol to ensure that residents of, and visitors to, Fife are effectively warned and informed on all relevant operational aspects of the Open Championship, both in the run-up to and during the event
- Link with the Local Communities and Business sub-group to ensure media and public messaging is timeous and up-to-date

Chair: [Redacted] *Tourism Northern Ireland*

**Medical Sub-Group
Terms of Reference:**

- Organise the R&As oncourse medical provisions for the 153rd Open
- Develop a medical plan for inclusion in the Event Plan and ensure these plans dovetail with the Emergency Incident Plan

Chair: [Redacted] *The R&A Chief Medical Officer*

