



ROYAL NORWICH

THE FUTURE OF GOLF IS IN NORFOLK'S HANDS

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Whilst the historic sport of golf has its heritage (dating back to the 15th Century), in Scotland, its future is set to tee off in Norfolk, England.

Royal Norwich is working closely with the R & A (The Royal and Ancient Golf Club) to shift the perception of golf from the “stuffy, retirement sport” of old, to an inclusive sport, open to all.

Opening on its new site just four years ago, Royal Norwich, now based in Weston Longville, Norwich, is taking strides to shape the future of golf, using its facilities and ways of working as a blueprint for the future of golf courses and their accompanying country clubs across the world.

Captaining the various projects at Royal Norwich is CEO John Kerr, who is ensuring the Club is taking a philanthropic, sustainable, and inclusive approach to its development.

Changing Perceptions in Golf

Since taking on the role of CEO in 2022, one of John’s missions has been to attract a wider demographic of people to the Country Club, as well as the sport in general.

Launching at the Club’s new home in 2019 could feel like unfortunate timing for Royal Norwich. However, the Club saw the pandemic have an inverse effect on the business, being one of the only safe activities people could participate in.

“This has opened the door for the government to consider the positive effect golf can have on people’s mental wellness,” said John, “being outdoors, socialising with others, and the low-impact activity of walking are all known to have positive effects on mental health”.

Now, in one of Royal Norwich’s flagship projects, it is embarking on a triple-



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CEO John Kerr



line study alongside the R & A and Professor Charlie Foster to encourage the government to socially prescribe Golf as a support to mental health.

“Golf is more quickly accessible than other therapies offered by the NHS, which we know is under a lot of strain. We are excited to be one of the first industries to be able to offer alternative, complementary support,” shared John.

Challenging the perception that golf is for retired, middle to upper class men, since its move four years ago Royal Norwich has brought its average visitor age down to 51. Now, John is establishing a full set of facilities to entice 20-45 year olds.

“To encourage both men and women in this age range to spend their time and money at the club we have completely modernised how we approach the traditional members-only golf club,” explained John, “anyone can come and enjoy the facilities at Royal Norwich, you don’t need to be a member, there is no dress code, and the whole family is welcome”.

A key component in getting the whole family golfing, particularly those in the 20-45 demographic, is seeing more women on the green.



Again, Royal Norwich is working in partnership with the R & A, becoming a registered signatory in the Women in Golf charter.

Additionally, the introduction of its 6-hole golf course is the perfect starting point for any person looking to start in the sport.

“Not only is it a good entry level, the 6-hole course allows younger people who may be more time-restricted to enjoy a game of golf,” John continued, “we have 20:20 cricket in addition to Test cricket, so why not offer more variety of play in golf?”

Royal Norwich also runs a successful Junior Academy, which currently engages 120 young people per week. Its aim is to encourage fun over competition.

“By offering a facility where the parents can play alongside their children at the 6-hole means we’re aiming for organic growth from the Juniors upwards,” explained John.

Based on 350 acres of historic estate, the championship 18-hole golf course only uses around half of the land, so there is plenty of room for other activities at the club.

As well as its bar and restaurant, The Stables, Royal Norwich has just launched its gym facility, and in the summer will open its Paddle Court to visitors, too.

“We built Royal Norwich from years of research into the needs of our Club visitors, and now we are on the way to offering a full spectrum of facilities meaning that people can enjoy the Club week on week, whether they choose to golf, come for food, enjoy one of our fine-dining experiences, or attend a wedding!” said John.

Royal Norwich received its wedding licence in December 2022, hosting its first wedding at the venue in May 2023.

“The beauty of marrying at Royal Norwich is that we can cater for all,” shared John. “Whether it’s an intimate wedding of 10, or a bigger scale of up to 300 people, we have rooms to suit, from our more traditional oak panelled setting to the contemporary and light The Stables”.

And John should know - he and his now wife, Izzy, were the first to marry at the venue.

Whilst Royal Norwich’s offering is already vast, John and his board of member directors don’t have intentions of standing still. As well as a woodland walk opening on the estate in July 2023, John foresees the potential to expand the residence to include a spa and hotel rooms.

“Norfolk is lacking a luxury hotel and spa, and I believe Royal Norwich can be the answer to that,” he said.



Philanthropy and Education Golf

Royal Norwich's woodland walk is the perfect symbol of the biodiversity of the grounds, where untouched areas of land remain ecologically diverse.

The purpose built venue has taken the environment into account from a business perspective, too, ensuring investments into sustainability have been made across the estate.

The country club boasts water sustainability, utilising a reservoir to harvest water, rather than taking it from the grid. This is coupled with an intelligent irrigation system which can be managed remotely dependent on weather conditions. In addition, Royal Norwich has invested in solar, with the buildings being powered in this manner where possible.

With every industry being expected to meet the demands of Industry 4.0, Royal Norwich are once again, blueprinting for the future with its Turfcare Academy.

"The Turfcare Academy, which encompasses the full management of a golf course and club, is an opportunity to teach the next generation of leaders in golf," John explained, "it gives students the opportunity to learn at a championship golf course, and then roll out their technological and sustainable learning across the world - we've partnered with international golf courses to facilitate placements once students have qualified".



As well as turfcare education, which plans to offer a degree course, the academy also gives students the opportunity for golf performance coaching.

"I believe if we give students the opportunity to not only love playing golf but love working in it, we will retain them in the industry for the future," John continued.

The Turfcare Academy is an example of Royal Norwich's philanthropic work, reinvesting any profit into both the development of the course and country club, as well as the community.

The Race to Royal Norwich

Despite having only established itself at its Weston Longville home in 2019, Royal Norwich is already getting a name for itself at a high-level within the industry.

In October 2023, the estate will host the Championship Finals of the Clutch Pro Tour, the Race to Royal Norwich.

The course expects to welcome over 200 spectators and the best young talent in Europe at the prestigious event.

"We're really excited to host the Clutch Pro Tour, and it's a tremendous accolade for such a young course. In the future, we would like to see LIV play at Royal Norwich," said John, "I believe in planning big - even if we get half way there we can be proud!"

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