

# **Prestonfield crowned “golf club of the year”**

**In a classic example of ‘rags to riches’ Prestonfield have been crowned Scottish golf club of the year.**

By their own admission Prestonfield were in a challenging financial state five years ago and this was acknowledged after the ceremony by captain Lynn Abernethy who also paid tribute to the two other short-listed clubs – Castle Douglas and Mearns Castle.

Lynn said on social media: “This award means a lot to us. Our members know all too well that Prestonfield has faced more than its fair share of tough times over the past few years. We’ve taken this club from a position of financial hardship, through Covid, flooding – and the perhaps more predictable challenges of good old Scottish weather to a flourishing, welcoming community and stunning golfing experience. And by “we” I mean members, staff and volunteers who consistently go above and beyond to help build this club.”

The citation for an award, sponsored by Pin Visio, said: “They (Prestonfield) have gone above and beyond to create a welcoming community, grow the game and positively impact membership.”

What also counted was an emphasis placed on cultivating wildlife as summed up by Head Green Keeper, Shaun Cunningham, who said: “We feel that our golf course plays a vital role preserving our natural environment as it provides a stable

habitat for the local wildlife and biodiversity.

“It is the greenkeeping team’s duty to work with nature to maintain, conserve and enhance an environment that will promote biodiversity on the course. With this in mind we have created a more natural setting for golf by increasing areas of unmown grass, providing habitat via bird boxes, bee homes and bug hotels, along with greatly reducing chemical applications. All of which were delivered without affecting golfers’ experiences.

“All the good initiatives we have introduced have resulted in us being chosen as a rehoming site for the Scottish SPCA. The natural areas we have on the course are a perfect site to release rehabilitated mammals and birds back into the wild. Our first rehoming were four hedgehogs who made themselves at home very quickly.”



Prestonfield is an official rehoming site for SSPCA for hedgehogs

Key initiatives include:

- The introduction of conservation rough areas, which have increased biodiversity while reducing maintenance costs and fuel usage.
- Installing bee homes, bird boxes, and a bug hotel to promote local wildlife.
- Eliminating herbicide and insecticide use while

significantly reducing fungicide applications.

- Upgrading to electric golf buggies.
- A newly created vegetable garden that supplies fresh produce to the clubhouse kitchen.
- Partnerships with local wildlife groups, including the Scottish Raptor Group, which monitors raptor boxes on-site.
- Official rehoming site for SSPCA for hedgehogs

The club has also encouraged the return of native wildlife, including deer, peregrine falcons, kestrels, and owls, as a result of its sustainability efforts.

Those attending the award ceremony also heard organisers say: "Prestonfield Golf Club's progressive outlook as an ambitious and welcoming venue for golfers of all ages and backgrounds has earned them the honour.

"Judges were impressed by not only the strength of the business but also the sense of community that is felt through all aspects of club life.

"Environmental projects, school initiatives and charity involvement has brought the club closer to local groups outside of the game.

And from being in a loss-making situation just five years ago, the club is now in the black with over 630 playing members and around 100 enjoying social membership.

"With junior and female membership on the rise, planning in place for growth and the club clear in its values, mission and strategy, Prestonfield is well positioned to deal with the economic challenges that lie ahead."

Prestonfield have previously been recognised for their



commitment to junior golf overseen by the convenor, Liz Taylor, who has watched junior membership grow from four when she started out in the role to the present total of 89.

Liz said: *"It's absolutely fantastic to be a member of Prestonfield Golf Club."*

*"Everyone is so friendly and makes you feel welcome. We have an environment where everyone is included. We create that as a club not just for the members, but the local community as well."*



