

# Introducing our new Head of Golf and Leisure

A question and answer session with Liam Clayton who has taken on an expanded role within Stoke by Nayland Resort.



***Liam Clayton***

Just over a month into his new role at SbN, we caught up with Liam and asked him about the challenges he faces and about his own personal journey to get to his new role.

**Q. Your face is well known to SbN Leisure Club members, but not so much around the Golf Club. Can you tell us a bit about yourself?**

**A.** “I’m a local Essex man, born and bred in Colchester and have played golf for as long as I can remember. I have been a member at The Essex, Braintree and latterly at Colchester and my handicap was down to 8 – although the last year or so has been really busy and I have hardly had a chance to play – but that is something I want to change now.

“My professional background has always been in fitness. I started out working in gyms in Colchester and then went self-employed for 10 years as a personal trainer. Around 10 years ago I was given the chance to get into gym management as General Manager at Lexden Wood, which is where I first had responsibility for the golf side of things.

“I moved to Stoke by Nayland in July 2023 as Leisure Manager”.

**Q. Are you a family man?**

**A.** “Yes, my wife and I have four children, ranging from a 13-year-old down to a two year old, so that keeps me pretty busy when I am not working”.

**Q. Can you tell us a bit more about your new role as Head of Golf and Leisure?**

**A.** “First of all, I will be continuing with my management of the Leisure side of the business, but in addition, I have taken on responsibility for all things connected to the operational side of the golf business.

”That means the golf team itself, commercial golf, the Golf Club membership, the Pro Shop and, of course, member and visitor satisfaction.

**Q. What about work out on the golf courses themselves?**

**A.** “No, everything on the golf courses will remain the responsibility of Matt Manning, the Managing Director, working with Steve Young the Head Greenkeeper”.

**Q. After a month in the role, what have you identified as your main priorities?**

**A.** “There are a couple of priority areas as I see it. Firstly, there is the whole area of golf membership and golf participation. We have just gone through a very successful renewal period with around 90% member retention, but we are also looking at how we attract new members, how new members are integrated into the club and how the membership overall balances with the commercial golf and green fees side of the business.

“And the other major project I am working on is the planning of the Stoke by Nayland Academy. We are hopeful that we can get this up and running by the Spring.

“The vision is for us to have an Academy for junior golfers as a ”club” in its own right where they can be introduced to the game, feel part of something bigger and gradually progress through to being members of the Golf Club.

“But I see the Academy as more than that. It will also be a coaching centre for beginner golfers, current members, members from other clubs maybe, all benefitting from the experience of our SbN golf professionals.

“I will be working with the Management Board of the Golf Club and the three current Captains to identify what they want or need from the Academy so we can accommodate everyone”.

**Q. How important is member satisfaction, and how do you intend to address it?**

**A.** “The most important thing to me, is to have a thriving, happy and engaged membership base. And one of the foundations to that is ensuring good communication. Very often, any gripes or issues members have can be allayed with good communication, so that is one area I will be focussing on.

“But that also means that I need to know what these issues are, so I will be looking at ways of improving engagement with members, listening to what they have to say and hopefully building from there”.

**Q. So are you encouraging members to contact you if they have any suggestions?**

**A.** “Yes of course. I would welcome any members introducing themselves if they see me around the Sports Bar or the Pro Shop, and they can email me on [liam.clayton@stokebynayland.com](mailto:liam.clayton@stokebynayland.com) .

“But of course members can still channel questions and comments through the Golf Manager Harry Hibbert in the usual way at [harry.hibbert@stokebynayland.com](mailto:harry.hibbert@stokebynayland.com)