

ENGLISH GOLF UNION – MODEL COURSE POLICY DOCUMENT

1. Overview

The aim of this model Course Policy Document (CPD) is to provide guidance to clubs in establishing their own policy document, that will bring continuity and consistency to the management of the golf course. This is particularly important in the context of members clubs where Committee's change on a regular basis.

This model document will deal mainly in principle as to what should be included, and is supplemented in places by sample clauses set out in italics. Specific recommendations (for example cutting heights) need to be agreed between the Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper (CM/HGK) and the policy making body of the club and then set down in the policy document. The key contributor to the document should be the CM/HGK who should put forward recommendations for all aspects of managing the golf course in consultation with a qualified agronomist and or ecologist if appropriate. Once agreed by the management of the club, the policies laid down can be reviewed but should only be changed in consultation with the CM/HGK.

Many courses are now being managed in line with sound ecological practices and therefore it is assumed that any Environmental Management Plan will be incorporated into or dovetail with CPD.

It is absolutely vital that all parties are clear on their roles and responsibilities. Unfortunately there is evidence in members clubs that these are not clearly defined and the position of the CM/HGK can be undermined by well meaning volunteers- in most cases the much maligned Chair of Green and the Green Committee.

However there is also evidence that more forward thinking clubs are streamlining their management structures, and reducing the size of unwieldy committees. The EGU recognises and supports this trend and accepts that the need for a Greens Committee is questionable in a modern club structure. A successful implementation of a CPD is more likely if the Board/Management Committee takes a collective responsibility for golf course policy and appoints one person to communicate and discuss this with the CM/HGK. It is also vital that this appointed person understands where his/her role finishes and the CM/HGK starts. Guidance on this is provided in Appendix 1.

It should go without saying that the Golf Course should be the main focus of any Club's/Golf Centre's strategic planning, for it is what the members/green fee payers mainly pay their subscriptions/green fees. The demands on Course Managers and Greenkeepers are increasing as they grapple with issues such as climate change and all year round golf. The adoption of a CPD should be a valuable tool in assisting the CM/HGK and Committee, Board or Owner in meeting the very high expectations of today's golfers.

Neil Cockbill
Golf Services Secretary
May 2003

2 ENGLISH GOLF UNION – MODEL COURSE POLICY DOCUMENT

Objectives

Objectives will vary depending from where a club is starting. For example, if the course is in relatively poor condition then it may take a number of years to remedy the problems and bring it up to standard and therefore initial short-term objectives must be conservative and realistic.

Avoid very general objectives such as 'to make this course the best in the County' as they are not measurable and too subjective.

A more appropriate objective maybe: 'With the aid of a phased drainage programme provide the members with year round golf playing off grass tees and on the main greens in the winter months providing it is not to the detriment of the long term health and condition of the course.'

Roles & Responsibilities

Policy making for the Golf Course : Management Committee or Board of Directors or Owner in consultation with the CM/HGK and any other relevant Professional Advisor (agronomist, ecologist etc)

Management of the Golf Course and Greenstaff: The CM/HGK or Deputy Liaison between CM/HGK and Management Committee/Board of Directors (Members clubs)

Chairman of the Green or Greens Liaison Officer/Director. General Manager or Secretary/Manager

Appendix 1 to this document provides an outline job description for the Greens Liaison

Officer/Director and examples of Policy decisions.

Resources

Staff – Numbers and positions held

Qualifications & Experience required for different positions

Agreed Training Courses and Continuing Professional Development

Opportunities for promotion/career development

Membership of Associations – British & International Greenkeepers Association

Financial – Agreed annual budget for purchase of materials and services necessary for the successful implementation of the CPD.

Agreed levels of expenditure on machinery maintenance and renewal.

3 Timing of Major Work on the Course

Policy on the timing of major operations on the course will be stated and will vary from club to club. For example:

'Timing of essential maintenance operations such as the aeration programme will take priority over the fixtures programme and will be communicated well in advance to the members through course bulletins and notices. The CM/HGK will advise the Secretary/Manager of timings as far in advance as possible so competitions and visiting societies can be fitted in around the maintenance programme.'

Main season timing operations will be carried out with the objective of causing minimal disruption to putting surfaces e.g. by use of micro tines.'

In some clubs this position may not be workable or acceptable so a compromise should be worked out.

THE GOLF COURSE

This section should include broad objectives and how they will be achieved for the main areas of the course. (In this model document some sample objectives are suggested for some areas – tees & greens, and headings under which work will be undertaken). It is important to point out that the examples given are not definitive, as objectives and methods of achieving them will vary from course to course.

Greens

Objective

To provide in the main golfing season, true, firm, fast surfaces that will hold a well-struck shot played from a closely mown area.

To be achieved by:

Aeration programme: hollow tining, vertidrainage, scarifying - timings

Fertilisers and top dressings

Cutting heights, target putting speeds

Use of green iron and verticutting

Over seeding programme to improve sward composition

Removal or pruning of trees that inhibit light and air circulation

Use of temporary greens

Frost policy

Changing of hole position - frequency

Tees

Objective

To provide a firm, level surface during the main golfing season

To be achieved by:

4. Maintenance programme. (i.e. divot repair, aeration, fertiliser)

Cutting height during main season

Rotation of tee markers

Policy on tees to be used for general play/visitors

Winter play i.e. use of mats

Fairways

Range of cutting height

Aeration programme and timings

Any drainage planned

Shaping and approx width

Special preparation for major competitions - cross mowing/stripping

Divot repairs

Surrounds and Approaches

Cutting heights for surrounds and aprons

Rough & Semi-Rough

Cutting heights for semi and main rough

Cutting regimes will vary and tie in with any specific ecological guidelines that are being followed – for example the creation of eco corridors to encourage movement of invertebrates.

Irrigation

Objective

To use as little water as possible whilst recognising that during periods of drought it will be necessary to irrigate in order to sustain grass growth.

Balance of the use of town water and irrigation reservoir

Monitoring of abstraction to ensure licensed volumes not exceeded

Timing of system start up and drain down

Delivery rates for tee, approach and greens sprinklers

Woodland/Grassland/Water Bodies

Woodland Management Policy – thinning, species diversity planting

Management of rough grassland including the introduction of wild flowers

Water bodies – creation of buffer zones to prevent chemicals leaching into the water body and to provide good nesting for wildlife. Introduction of aquatic plants.

Quality testing intervals for water used for irrigation

Maintenance programme – weed clearance, dredging.

5 Ditches and Drainage

Clearing and maintenance of ditches, cutting regimes for the margins

Inspections and maintenance of covered drainage on fairways

Bunkers

Sand specification and depth in bunkers

Allocation of rakes to bunkers and where they are to be left

Note: page 469 R&A Decisions on the Rules of Golf – Rakes should be left outside bunkers in a place least likely to interfere with play

Public Rights of Way

Instructional notices will be erected and maintained which identify to both golfers and users of public footpaths/bridleways areas of potential danger.

GENERAL POLICY AREAS

Communication with Members/Visitors

A monthly course bulletin for notice boards will be produced which outlines forthcoming work on the course (esp. Greens) and why.

The CM/HGK and course staff to avoid discussing issues relating to the condition of the course with members or visitors.

Note: this last point needs to be supported by a reciprocal club rule that members and visitors should not make comments or complaints about the course to staff, but to direct them through the proper channels eg Owner, Chair of Green, Secretary.

Health & Safety

The HGK/CM will be responsible for ensuring that management of the course will be

carried out with due regard to the Clubs Health & Safety Policy at all times.
The Club's Health & Safety policy if implemented effectively should ensure:

- the workplace is safe and without risks;
- safe methods of working are set and followed;
- machinery and equipment is properly maintained and safe to use;
- equipment and harmful substances are used properly and stored safely;

6

- the welfare of employees is not affected by noise, dust or fumes;
- employees are provided with the protective clothing, training, information and supervision needed for them to work safely;
- employees have healthy working conditions, including adequate lighting, heating, ventilation and toilet facilities.

Regulations that apply to the above areas are:

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 (MHSW)
(key activities being Risk Assessments and Staff Training)

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981

The Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985
(RIDDOR)

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994 (COSHH) New 2002

It is very important that all staff when working on the course or in the green keeping compound are aware of their responsibilities for their own health & safety and that of their colleagues. In practice this means that rules and regulations emanating from Risk Assessments are strictly adhered to.

If work has to be carried out on the course during play (and this should be kept to a minimum) then the appropriate protective equipment should be worn according to the situation and corresponding risk assessment.

Use of Trolleys, Electric Trolleys, Motorised Buggies

Have a clear statement saying under what conditions any of the above will be prohibited from use and who is responsible for making the decision. The CM/HGK should be best placed to advise on this issue. The club must also ensure that it does not contravene the provisions of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act in respect of a policy for the use of motorised buggies.

Trolley/Buggy bans should be reviewed regularly

Machinery

A timed rolling plan for the replacement and addition of machinery in line with the Clubs policy on asset depreciation.

Up to date Training Records of Staff Competencies (e.g. using the GTC Wall chart)

Annual costed maintenance schedules

7

Course Closure

Define clearly and in what order personnel have authority to close the course for Agronomic reasons or reasons of Health & Safety:

A decision to close the course due to adverse weather conditions which put the condition of the course and safety of golfers at risk can be made by the following personnel:

Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper

Deputy Greenkeeper/ Course Manager

Secretary/Manager or Professional

For this to be effective staff rotas must ensure that at least one of these people will be available whatever day of the week it is.

Note: Suspension of play in competitions or the abandonment of a competition may be taken by the person responsible for the event as such a decision is concerned with the conditions for playing golf and not potential damage to the course.

Professional Advice

Clubs position on the use of consultants

Agronomy

Policy will vary from club to club in this area depending on the condition of the course and the level of experience and agronomic knowledge of the CM/HGK.

The CM/HGK will have recourse to the club's agronomist as and when the need arises. The club will receive an annual visit from an agronomist who is a member of the RIPTA – the Register of Independent Turfgrass Agronomists

Course Alteration/Remodelling

A statement of the club's policy, for example

Under no circumstances will any course design alterations be carried out without first consulting a qualified Golf Course Architect.

(The European Institute of Golf Course Architects can provide details of its members)

Any major plans to alter the course to be ultimately approved by the Members or the Owner .

8

Ecology

Strategy for ecological management, for example

The club will follow the advice given under the English Golf Environmental Scheme

The club will work in partnership with local conservation groups to ensure the course's potential for supporting a range of flora and fauna is exploited.

As the course lies on a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a

Management plan for the environmentally sensitive areas will be agreed with English Nature.

9

Appendix 1

Greens Liaison Director/Chair of Green – Suggested Outline Job Description

General

The role is one of support and monitoring to ensure that the key requirements of the course policy document are being implemented with the objective that the course is presented in the best possible condition for members and visitors.

Avoid at all costs daily or even regular interference in the management of the course – it should not be necessary. It is the CM/HGK who is responsible for doing this through his or her staff.

Specific Duties

Have regular meetings to review progress and listen and discuss any problems or

concerns the CM/HGK may have.

Discuss and identify training needs for the staff with CM/HGK. Agree programmes in line with the policy document.

Ensure that as far as possible specific tasks identified as a result of specialist advice from an agronomist or ecologist are done within the agreed timescale.

Assist the HGK/CM with annual budget proposals, if required.

In communication with main committee/board remain impartial and report the facts.

Ensure that communications with members such as course bulletins are produced on time.

Whilst having due regard for the overall financial requirements of the club, ensure that the CM/HGK has the resources (staff, equipment and consumables) to meet the aspirations and conditions laid down in the CPD.

NB It is acknowledged that at some clubs the CM/HGK may report to the Sec/Manager or General Manager.

Greens Policy Decisions – Main Board Committee

Examples:

Adoption of the Course Policy Document

Approval of capital expenditure on new machinery

Course alterations (based on a Golf Course Architects recommendations)

Approval of the Greens budget

Annual staff wage and salary review

The staging of national or county events

Policy on Golf Societies

Staffing levels

10

Appendix II

Useful Contacts:

The English Golf Union

The National Golf Centre

The Broadway

Woodhall Spa

Lincolnshire LN10 6PU

Tel 01526 354500, Fax 01526 354020 Email info@englishgolfunion.org

www.englishgolfunion.org

British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association

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York YO6 1UF

Tel 01347 833800, Fax 01347 833801 Email reception@bigga.co.uk

www.bigga.org.uk

Register of Independent Professional Turfgrass Agronomists (RIPTA)

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11
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12