

Betchworth Park Golf Club

Course / Environmental Policy (August 2021)

1. Introduction

The objective of this document is to establish a suitable structure for the management of the golf course. Material changes cannot be made to this document without the approval of the Captains Committee and the Board should any costs be involved.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Board: The Board will be responsible for establishing a Course Development Plan, the overall long-term strategy for the Club and ensuring that the Club is financially viable.

Course Manager: The Course Manager will be accountable both to the Board and the Secretary-Manager depending on the issue at hand, and will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the golf course. His responsibilities will include:

- ✓ Compliance with approved budgets which will be reviewed regularly
- ✓ Planning and undertaking maintenance of the course with due regard to the fixture list
- ✓ Management of all green-keeping staff including education, training and discipline
- ✓ Allocation of daily duties of his staff and compliance with Health + Safety legislation
- ✓ Machinery maintenance
- ✓ Preparation of operational schedules and maintenance of relevant records
- ✓ Proper and appropriate use of fertilisers and other chemicals
- ✓ Observation of appropriate ecology decisions and guidelines

The Course Manager will be authorised to seek professional advice where circumstances are deemed necessary. The Course Manager will attend all Greens committee meetings to present a report on course condition. Matters relating to capital expenditure and the financial aspects of future plans will be discussed directly with the Board.

3. Policy Statement

The course will be maintained and presented to the highest possible standard, with the intention to ensure that the course is one of the best parkland courses in Surrey.

The course will be maintained as a parkland course with firm, medium-fast fairways and greens wherever possible dependent upon weather conditions pertaining at the time.

Material changes to the course should only be undertaken with the express agreement of the Board and the membership at an AGM or EGM and after professional advice has been taken.

4. Environmental Policy

It is intended that the course and its surrounds shall be managed in accordance with best environmental principles to encourage suitable habitats for the indigenous flora and fauna. The cultivation of finer grasses, the management of trees, wooded areas and undergrowth to ensure adequate light, air flow and rainfall is of great importance in achieving this aim. For many years, the Club has employed the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) as consultants to help to develop the course to the best possible standard within our means.

When considering the environmental policy, there are a number of factors that need to be borne in mind. Most importantly, Betchworth Park Golf Club is a members' golf club which is managed to give members the

best possible playing facilities that the club can provide. A golf course by its very nature is grassland, which is essentially incompatible with woodland from an agronomic point of view. Grasslands are normally fast-draining, lacking in shade and with poor quality soil. Any sunshine is quickly and easily absorbed by the blades of grass and excellent air-flow allows good aspiration and nutrient uptake leading to healthy, disease-resistant grass plants. Trees and woodlands on the other hand create shade, disrupt airflow, and leaf fall leads to nutrient rich soil, creating an environment that is poor for growing grass.

Betchworth Park is a parkland course with both grassland and woodland. It is, therefore, necessary to find a good balance between the two. To that end, there are many things that we should / can do.

- ✓ Manage the woodlands effectively to ensure the safety of club members, visitors and the general public that may be using the public footpaths around and through the golf course
- ✓ Prune or cut down trees to ensure that the playing strategy of any particular hole remains as close to the course architect's original intention as possible
- ✓ Prune or cut down trees to minimise shade and maximise air flow on important areas of the course such as tees and greens
- ✓ Prunings and timber should be stacked in suitable places around the course to provide a good environment for insects and small mammals
- ✓ Woodland areas are to be checked regularly to maintain specimen trees with sufficient space around them to thrive
- ✓ Wildflowers can be introduced in select open areas around the course
- ✓ Bees and other pollinators can be encouraged with the provision of hives or similar items, together with pollen rich plants and flowers for them to feed on
- ✓ Nesting boxes for a variety of small birds placed around the various woodland areas would help with pest control – especially the introduction of starlings to reduce leatherjackets
- ✓ Conserve as much rainwater as possible and use to supplement supplies from our borehole in addition to minimising use of mains water

5. Green-keeping Staff

The number of staff will be agreed annually by the Board and accounted for within the Course budget. Extra casual labour can be employed as required and will be subject to Board approval.

The need for well-trained staff is recognised and encouraged through in-house and external training courses, the aim being to improve the overall working flexibility of the staff.

The safety of the green-keeping staff is of paramount importance and green-keeping staff will have precedence on the Course. Members, their guests or visitors should NOT play if a green-keeper is in any danger and should wait until signalled to play by the green-keeper.

6. The Course

6.1 Tees

Tees should be level, of good appearance and large enough to allow rotation to minimise wear and tear. Irrigation and fertilising shall be sufficient to maintain good, healthy grass growth. Divots will be repaired on a daily basis by the Green-keeping staff.

6.2 Fairways, Surrounds and Approaches

Irrigation and fertilising shall be sufficient to maintain good, healthy grass growth in order to produce fairways of good appearance. The Height of Cut (HoC) to be dependent upon seasonality and weather conditions. Typically, HoC in winter will be 15-17mm reducing to 15mm in summer unless weather conditions demand otherwise.

Divots will be repaired on a weekly basis by the Artisans Club using mixture provided by the Green-keeping staff.

6.3 Semi-Rough and Rough

The semi-rough will be clearly defined. Main areas of rough will be managed to encourage a good ecological balance for wild flora and fauna. The planting of wild-flowers to encourage a balanced insect population and the restriction of invasive scrub plants such as brambles and Himalayan Balsam should provide a pleasing environment for all.

6.4 Greens

The policy for management of the greens will be continuous and consistent with advice given by the consultant agronomist from STRI.

All maintenance work must be properly recorded and all records must be accessible to those with the necessary authority.

The objective is to produce firm, medium-fast, smooth and true putting surfaces for most of the year depending on grass growth, weather conditions and golfing wear and tear.

Greens consist primarily of common bent, fescue and poa-annua grasses and the policy is to minimise the proportion of poa-annua as best as possible.

A regular programme of aeration and top dressing helps to reduce 'thatch', ie the proportion of organic matter present in the top 15cms of the green. Mechanical treatments such as verti-draining, pencil tining, light scarification should be carried out at regular intervals to help moisture penetration, aeration and thatch control. More severe mechanical treatments such as hollow tining, slit tining and heavy scarification should be carried out during the regular spring and autumn course work programmes. These treatments are designed to achieve the best possible greens with the minimum disturbance to the plants and the surface. All pesticide usage will be recorded for Health + Safety compliance and for fixture reference.

Weed, disease and worm control should be undertaken as necessary and only with approved products.

The height of cut (HoC) is the responsibility of the Course Manager depending on weather conditions, turf and soil conditions and any forth-coming matches or competitions. The aim is to produce greens with consistent speed and roll with the latter criterion taking priority.

Greens will be watered only when absolutely necessary to maintain good growth; hand-watering and wetting agents can be used additionally during particularly dry periods.

The Course Manager has responsibility for the siting of greens flags, taking into account the rules and regulations of CONGU and the R+A. Holes will be trimmed daily and changed twice-weekly, weather and turf conditions permitting.

Measurement and recording of key performance data should be made regularly to chart the progress of the putting surfaces.

6.5 Greens surrounds

All golfers should be encouraged to avoid taking trolleys or buggies on easily worn areas ie between greens and bunkers or on / near tees. The use of ropes, signage may be necessary.

6.6 Fertilisation / Pesticides

Our policy governing the use of fertilisers is to use fertilisers only when necessary following soil analysis, especially in the case of phosphate fertilisers. Both organic and inorganic nitrogen fertilisers will be used as required, together with bacterial and root stimulants to help breakdown thatch and help with nutrient uptake. The level of nitrogen fertilisers applied each year should be in the range of 80–120 kg/hectare.

Pesticides will be used when required and in line with Government / Authority guidelines.

6.7 Top Dressing

The top dressing programme shall be ongoing throughout the season using a specified mixture that matches the existing root zone. Consistency of texture and quality from year to year is the aim with light monthly dressings throughout the season and heavier dressings after spring and autumn coursework

6.8 Water Management

Water will be used sparingly insofar as it is necessary to maintain adequate growth of the finer, indigenous grass varieties which are to be favoured. Water quality of both mains water and borehole will be checked regularly and results recorded.

6.9 Drainage and Ditches

The efficient dispersal of surface water is of prime importance and all ditches need to be kept clear. During the summer months, growth on the banks will be cut back and cleared, whilst in early winter leaves, fallen branches and other impediments shall be removed to ensure free flow of water and to prevent flooding as far as is possible.

Other covered drains will be checked frequently and any blockages cleared.

6.10 Bunkers

Green-keepers will rake bunkers regularly to ensure a proper depth of raked, consolidated sand (approx. 5cm) and will rake bunkers prior to Club competitions and other major events.

Bunkers will be checked regularly to ensure that drains are clear, water retention does not occur and will be renovated using appropriate materials. The daily schedule of work will include brushing sand from bunker faces, wind-blown sand and any scattered during the course of play.

Rakes (minimum 1) will be provided in every bunker for players to tidy up after themselves.

The choice of sand used will be specified and consistent throughout the Course.

6.11 Pathways

All pathways will be checked regularly and maintained in a level, firm and good condition to avoid the potential for injury to players or damage to their property.

6.12 Trees

Trees will be pruned and cleared as necessary to ensure good light, airflow and rainfall to the playing areas. Damaged trees will be treated as required to ensure the safety of Members, visitors or passers-by. Diseased trees will be cleared as soon as practicable. See section 4. Environmental Policy and separate 'Tree Management Policy Document'.

6.13 Course Furniture

All course furniture is to be clean and maintained in good condition.

Ball washers are to be filled each week.

Tee markers and pin flags are to be cleaned and replaced weekly.

6.14 Machinery

All machinery used on the course shall be maintained correctly and cleaned regularly in the designated washing area to maximise the efficiency and good appearance of our operation.

6.15 Regular Course Maintenance

The first Monday of each month is designated as a day for regular course maintenance to be undertaken, subject to there being no major societies or similar activities scheduled. This is especially the case during the summer months when operations such as pencil tining, light top dressing, light scarification are necessary to maintain greens and other aspects of the Course in best condition.

7. Scheduling of Events

All major course maintenance programmes must be entered in the calendar prior to the scheduling of golf events.

8. Public Rights of Way

Instructional notices will be erected and maintained which advise passers-by using the public footpaths/bridleways as well as golfers, of any potential dangers.

9. Safety Aspects and Course Closure

The Board have overall responsibility for the safety of all Club staff, members, their guests and visitors in the event of adverse weather conditions. These are defined primarily as thunder storms and poor visibility due to fog.

A number of blind drives exist on the Course (9th, 12th, 14th, 17th and 18th) and the protocol that must be observed is that players are responsible for checking that the match in front is safely out of driving range before teeing off. The exception to this rule being the 18th where the bell must be rung to inform the match

following that it is safe to tee off. Signs will be maintained beside the 1st and 10th tees informing players of these blind drives and their responsibilities.

A small number of properly licensed people are authorised by the Club to shoot pests (mostly rabbits, but also rats) in the very early mornings or late evenings. The police are aware and conduct checks, any unauthorised shooting must be immediately reported to the Secretary / Manager and the police.

The criteria for course closure are as follows:

- In the event of fog, if the trees on the far side of the practise area cannot be clearly seen from the terrace in front of the Clubhouse, play cannot be permitted.
- In the event of storms with thunder and lightning a klaxon will be sounded, the course is then officially closed and play cannot be permitted.
- Authority to close the Course will be vested in the Course Manager, the Secretary-Manager or in their absence, their nominees.
- A ban on the use of buggies and trolleys when their use could cause unacceptable levels of damage to the Course shall be the responsibility of the Course Manager, or his nominee.
- Those same persons shall have authority to order a resumption of play.

10. Conduct and Complaints

Members and visitors are expected to behave in a civil manner and with full consideration to other Members, their guests and to Club staff. Members and Visitors are expected to play at a good pace and to let following players through when appropriate to do so.

Notices

Notices to Members and visitors concerning the use of chemicals on the Course and when any abnormal work is in progress will be placed on Notice Boards around the Clubhouse and will be up-dated daily.

Players and Greens Staff

It is the Players responsibility to ensure that it is appropriate for them to play without endangering the Greens staff in any way. Greens staff will acknowledge that a Player is waiting to play, stand aside and give a clear signal to play through. Whilst the Course is in preparation for the day (up until about 08.30), Players are requested to give priority to Greens staff. When Course preparation is complete, Greens staff will give priority to Players.

Care of the Course

Members and visitors are expected to adhere to golf etiquette whereby;

- Divots are always replaced on fairways
- Bunkers are raked smooth after use and rakes replaced carefully back in the bunker.
- Pitch-marks on greens are to be repaired in the recommended manner.
- Use the pathways that are installed on the course at great expense to prevent excessive wear and tear to high traffic areas
- Avoid taking trolleys / buggies between any bunkers / greens or on / near green aprons

Complaints

Any complaint regarding the Course is to be made to the Secretary-Manager and not directly to any member of the Greens staff. The Secretary-Manager will investigate the complaint with the Course Manager, and the matter will be referred to the Board if necessary.

L R Jennings

Chairman - Greens Committee