

WHITSTABLE & SEASALTER GOLF CLUB

GOLF COURSE POLICY DOCUMENT 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

This revised policy document, based on a previous version dated May 2017, includes updated management arrangements for the course at Whitstable & Seasalter Golf Club. This update has been approved by the Board and will be published on the Club website for members to view. Responsibility for future revisions of this policy will rest with the Course Policy / Planning Group and the Club's main Committee.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To provide a high quality well manicured course, within the constraints of available resources, for the enjoyment of members of all playing abilities, and their guests
- To operate the course in a sustainable and environmentally friendly fashion
- To keep the course open for play for as much of the year as possible

The long-term financial viability of Whitstable Golf Club is dependent on a thriving membership that believes it gets value for money and is satisfied with the quality of services provided. Arrangements for the course during winter months should be focused on meeting members' expectations that the course will be routinely available for play. Closure of the whole course or parts of the course will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances to prevent unacceptable course damage that takes a long time to recover or requires expensive repair.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Course Policy / Planning Group** will be a sub-committee of the Club's main committee: Membership of this group will include; Secretary/Club Manager, Director of Green-keeping Services and three playing member representatives. The head greenkeeper will be invited to attend meetings as required.

The main responsibilities of the Course Policy Planning Group will be to:

- a) To prepare a quarterly golf course report for the General Committee meetings.
- b) Prepare any new policies relating to the golf course and review/update existing policies relating to the golf course annual.
- c) Develop a 2 to 5 year plan for golf course improvements, taking full account of views and advice from; playing members, greenkeepers, agronomist and other stake holders

All policies and plans prepared by the Course Policy and Planning Group will be subject to Committee and Board approval before their implementation.

The **Director for Greenkeeping Services** will manage all resources associated with greenkeeping services and be responsible for day-to-day issues concerning course presentation and works on the course.

Responsibilities include –

- Managing greenkeeping costs within pre-agreed budgetary limits
- Managing greenkeeping staff and ensuring correct staff management practices are followed
- Following the Club's disciplinary and grievance procedures when necessary
- Ensuring all necessary Health and Safety Management arrangements relating to green-keeping services are in place.

The Head Green-keeper will have delegated authority to purchase a range of items within pre-agreed budgetary limits, in accordance with Club procurement procedures.

Head Greenkeeper's responsibilities include –

- Preparing work schedules for greenkeeping staff
- Maintaining necessary works schedules and records;
- Maintaining machinery
- Working to Health and safety requirements particularly in respect of
 - Safe Operation of Equipment and PPE
 - Movement and Handling
 - COSHH
 - Loan Working
- Advising the Course Policy Planning Group when required
- Providing input to annual budget setting for green-keeping services.
- Attending meetings as necessary with suppliers/contractors and supervising contractors working on the course and in the tractor shed.

The Head-green-keeper will liaise with the Secretary or Director of Greenkeeping Services on any problem areas.

The Finance Director will monitor expenditure for green-keeping services and routinely report details of budgetary performance for green-keeping services to the board.

4. RESOURCES

4.1 Staff and Succession Planning

The agreed staffing level for green-keeping services is set at:-

- One Full time Head Green-keeper;
- One Full time Assistant Green-keeper

The board is committed to providing training for all greens staff, who will be encouraged to obtain greenkeeping qualifications to achieve their full potential and enhance their progress within the greens staff structure. Greenkeepers will also be encouraged to become members of B.I.G.G.A and attend discussion groups and seminars organised by that Association.

4.2 Financial

The Board is committed to the allocation of funding whenever possible to ensure the delivery of course facilities as described within this policy document.

5. TIMING OF WORK ON THE COURSE

5.1 Routine work

Greenkeepers will be vigilant and ensure they do not delay play unreasonably. However, greenkeepers have to get through their work, and golfers are therefore required to accept that some delays to play are inevitable from time to time. Members should give consideration to greenkeepers and avoid delaying any work on the course that's in progress. This is particularly likely during the early part of the day. Social golf will only be allowed to start from the 3rd tee after 8.30am.

5.2 Non-Routine Work

It will be the responsibility of the Head Greenkeeper, in discussions with the Director of Greenkeeping Services, to plan non-routine / special project work well in advance to ensure minimum disruption to the golf programme, and so members can be advised in advance of unavoidable changes to course availability.

6. COMPLAINTS

If Club members or visitors wish to comment on the condition of the course or on the conduct of any member of the green-keeping staff, they should submit their comments to the Members Liaison Director in writing, preferably by email, so the matter can be properly considered before a response is provided. Under no circumstances should members raise their complaints directly with green-keeping staff.

7. SUSTAINABILITY & CONSERVATION

Whitstable Golf Club is committed to protecting the environment and naturalising areas of the course where this is possible. England Golf encourage this approach and set out below are some of the benefits they identify -

- a) **Green-keepers can prioritise:** Naturalising some areas enables green-keepers to focus on the areas that matter most – tees, fairways, greens and bunkers
- b) Join the best of the best: Some of the worlds more revered courses are the most natural! Why is that?
- c) A stronger club going forward: Maintenance savings help with overall profitability of the club, and can be allocated to other essential maintenance and future investments
- d) Longer-term protection: Helping the club overcome challenges, such as drainage, flooding, extreme heat and drought, and opening possibilities for grants for natural solutions to wider problems
- e) Pride and reputation: Naturalising the golfing landscape and boosting biodiversity can help transform image and generate pride and positive publicity amongst members and the community

The golf course is managed in a manner that is sensitive to the fauna and flora that are found within the boundaries of the Club. We have numerous areas of various heights of cut across the course which act as wildlife corridors and the use of fertiliser on the course is kept to the minimum required. Consultation with our agronomist and the Kent Wildlife Trust, will be undertaken routinely.

8. THE COURSE

8.1 Greens

The greens are of original push-up construction and are predominately London Clay with poor drainage capability. The exceptions are the double 5th/6th green and part of the 8th green which have a shingle base. Annual meadow grass (poaannua) used to be the predominate species, though due to the austere management practised, there is now significant and increasing amounts of bent grass (agrostis) and some fescue (festuca) to be found, along with some unsightly rye grass (loliumperrenne).

Greens are managed in an ecologically sound and sustainable manner, designed to encourage the finer grasses to the detriment of the poaannua. This management will also improve the permeability and health of the rootzone thus providing better playing conditions for as much of the year as possible.

The aeration programme consists of verti-draining in the early autumn and deep slit tining when appropriate. Light verti cutting is practised on a weekly basis during the main growing season. Fertilisation is kept to a minimum with organic nitrogen/potash used in spring and summer - no phosphates are used. Iron and seaweed along with wetting agent are applied as a spray during the main growing season with an iron solution used during the winter months. Top dressing is applied to greens in spring and summer and after verti draining in the autumn - top dressing used is Fendress.

The greens are cut to a length of between 4.5 and 6mm dependant on season.

8.2 Temporary Greens

Temporary greens are cut to a length of 6mm when in use ,and for the rest of the year are maintained at 11mm. They are for use when the main greens are unfit due to waterlogging. They are not frost greens and will not normally be used as an alternative to main greens during frosty/ icy conditions.

Temporary greens will also be brought into use when top dressing is being applied to the main greens.

8.3 Surrounds & Approaches

Surrounds and approaches are maintained at a height of cut of 11mm.They are aerated as per the greens and are mown three times a week during the main growing season. Cuttings are boxed off.

8.4 Tees

The grassed teeing areas are maintained at a height of cut of 11mm and are mowed twice weekly in the growing season. The grass tees will operate throughout the main playing season and as far into the off-season as possible while there is sufficient growth for recovery. Tee mats will be used in the winter period – these will be regularly brushed and the slots cleared. Weed killing of the grass tees is carried out annually. Divotting is an ongoing operation. Cuttings are boxed off.

Aeration includes verti-draining and slitting.

White tee blocks for the men's main course will be removed when course conditions require play to move from grass teeing areas to winter mats in order to protect these areas from foot traffic damage. This change is usually necessary during November. The use of grassed teeing areas will recommence as soon as ground conditions permit - usually during late March.

8.5 Fairways

Fairways are maintained at a height of cut of 14mm .They are aerated by the vertidrain machine in the autumn and by slit tining subsequently. They are divotted in spring and autumn and weedkilling is carried out during the early summer. There is a single fairway cut around the main and temporary greens.

8.6 Semi Rough

Semi rough is maintained at a height of 50 mm .Management is similar to that of the fairways.

8.7 Rough

The rough is maintained at a height of 100mm .The uncut rough is left untouched to encourage a diversity of natural habitats for plants and wildlife.

8.8 Wear Management

Wear management becomes necessary, when foot & trolley routes become worn and lead to inferior playing conditions. This is usually during the off-season when growth is not sufficient to counteract wear. White lines are the preferable method of control with hoops. Ropes will be used as a last resort to prevent access to some areas.

8.9 Drainage and ditches

All surface water outfall drainage systems to be monitored on a regular basis so as to ensure satisfactory discharge.

8.10 Irrigation

The club now has its own borehole for irrigation water and an automatic watering system which covers the greens, tees and the fairways immediately in front of the 5th and 8th greens due to their shingle base.

A minimum watering policy is strictly adhered to; hand held hosing is practised when necessary in prolonged dry periods. Watering is only carried out to keep the turf alive and to sustain the turf with enough vigour to counteract daily wear and tear in the growing season. The pop up sprinklers deliver the minimum amount of water to keep the turf healthy but are inefficient in windy conditions hence the need for topping up with hand held hosing.

Over watering is the cardinal sin of greenkeeping. In the long term, it results in an increase of poaannua to the detriment of the finer grasses and the health of the rootzone.

8.11 Bunkers

Bunkers are normally raked every other day, more often if necessary i.e for competitions. In the growing season, they are flymo'd and edges on a fortnightly basis .Topping up with sand is carried out as required.

8.12 Ditches / Dykes

See 7.9. Hand weeding of banks is carried out mainly in the winter period, but also when necessary during the growing season. Indigenous growth is untouched to give character and a natural look to the dykes. -Apart from the dykes we have a small area to the left of the 7th hole which is not treated with herbicide.

8.13 Boundary Walls & Fencing

Fences are monitored for damage and repaired when necessary

8.14 Pathways

Pathways are monitored to ensure they remain safe and don't cause slips, trips or falls.

9. CLOSING MAIN GREENS OR COURSE

9.1 The objectives set out in Section 2, highlight the importance of keeping the course open to meet members' expectations for a playable course throughout the year. Course conditions likely to require closures will normally exist when greens or more extensive areas of the course are waterlogged, or if the course is flooded or affected by frost or snow.

9.2 Ultimate responsibility for closing the course or taking main greens out of play, rests with the Board. For practical reasons the authority for green and course closures is delegated to the Head Greenkeeper or in his absence to the Assistant Head Greenkeeper. Closures will only be necessary to prevent unacceptable course damage likely to require expensive repairs or unsightly areas that won't recover in time for the start of the main playing season. Complete closure of the course will only be used as a last resort and alternative measures e.g. closing greens and or taking holes out of play, will be implemented, so that play may continue whenever possible.

9.3 Green-keepers will use guidance that been agreed with the Board, when considering the need for green / course closures or buggy / trolley restrictions to limit likely damage to the course - this guidance is set out in the attached Course Conditions Matrix (Appendix 1). This links the closures required and associated buggy / trolley restrictions, to three different course conditions (Slightly Wet, Moderately Wet and Very Wet), and describes the course damage that restrictions are intended to prevent.

9.4 When green-keepers implement closures and associated restrictions on Buggy / Trolley use, they will record details as an answerphone message as early as possible each morning. Details will also be posted on the course notice-board located in the car park. The director for green keeping services will be notified of any course closures as a matter of urgency and will review circumstances with the green-keepers on duty to consider any alternative measures that may permit play.

9.5 Decisions to re-open the course or greens will be taken by green-keepers in consultation with the Director for Greenkeeping services. In the event that representatives of the Club's Course Policy Planning Group believe any closures in place may be discontinued, they may discuss the situation with the

Director for Greenkeeping services. When making such representations it's anticipated that the course conditions matrix will be the primary guidance used to support the case for discontinuing restrictions in place.

10. TROLLEYS and BUGGIES

When the course is very wet, ground conditions may be so poor that it becomes necessary to restrict or prevent buggy and trolley usage. Initially restrictions will involve the electric ride on hire buggies and members private ride on buggies, then electric battery powered trolleys and pull trolleys. The decision to prohibit buggy use will be taken by greenkeepers in accordance with the Course Conditions Matrix document. The decision to prohibit the use of trolleys will similarly be based on the guidance set out in the course conditions Matrix but will be implemented by the Director of Greenkeeping services following a recommendation from greenkeeping staff.

Due consideration will always be given to members who are unable to play golf without a buggy or trolley as the result of a disability. The board will consider and approve any reasonable adjustment possible to permit such buggy / trolley use in order to meet its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2010. Details of reasonable adjustments considered and any reasonable adjustments implemented will be available in the club's buggy policies.

Greenkeepers will review all restrictions on buggy and trolley daily, and members will be advised of any restrictions on a daily basis, via the notice board at the entry to the course and the telephone answer-phone system. The club will not operate a blanket ban on golf buggies or trolleys for any pre-determined period longer than one day.

11. MACHINERY

The Head Green-keeper will provide a three year rolling plan of machinery replacements, additions for consideration and approval by the Greens Director and Greens Committee for submission to the board for incorporation into the Club's financial plan. The Head Green-keeper has responsibility to keep himself up-to-date with developments in golf course machinery and to bring his recommendations to the notice of the Course Policy Planning Group for inclusion in course improvement plans. He is also responsible for the day to day maintenance of all machinery and servicing arrangements. Greenkeepers are required to recognise the investment that has been made and ensure that all machinery is used with care.

12. PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Notwithstanding the competence and technical knowledge of the Head Green-keeper, it is the Club's policy to seek expert opinion as and when necessary. A qualified tree surgeon will be employed to fell or prune any mature tree. Health and Safety Issues will be addressed when necessary following consultation with the board's health and safety competent person.