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The Golf Club Secretary

BRIEFING AND PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR GOLF CLUB ADMINISTRATORS

IN THIS ISSUE

Licensing the Club's Vehicles

***Mike Shaw** LLM, Chief Executive of **The National Golf Clubs' Advisory Association (NGCAA),** advises on a potentially complicated area for golf clubs.*

The Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994, provides that every vehicle used on the public roads must be licensed and display a valid disc for which the correct rate of vehicle excise duty (VED) must be paid. Failure to do so will result in fines, licence penalty points and back payment of duty.

Many agricultural vehicles (sporting and recreational facilities are not agriculture), including tractors, do not have a duty applied to them; however, they still need to be licensed if used on the road. There are strict conditions attached to these concessions.

There are also regulations governing vehicles that are never used on the road and since January 1998 it has been necessary to make a declaration for these vehicles. A Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN) must be completed for vehicles used or kept off-road only if they were licensed for on-road use after January 1998.

There are, however, vehicles that are TAX EXEMPT.

Tractors, agricultural vehicles, historic and 'limited use' vehicles are not required to have VED paid on them; however, they must still be licensed and display a valid tax disc. Vehicles must be taxed in the correct class and strict criteria apply.

There are three main tax-exempt classes under which you may register vehicles and *although there is no tax payable it is still necessary to re-license vehicles annually and display a valid tax disc.*

- Special Concessionary Class – tractors, agricultural machines, materials handlers and other specified machines;
- Limited Use Class – any vehicles used for an extremely limited use on the road under strict Regulations; and
- Historic Vehicles – specified vehicles made before 1 January 1973.

Special Concessionary Class

Mowing machines, gritting machines, snow clearing vehicles, electric vehicles and steam operated vehicles tractors and machines used in agriculture are classified as Special Concessionary. Agricultural vehicles are sub categorized and are not dealt with in this article to avoid confusion. Sporting and recreational facilities are not included in the definition of agriculture. If you have any doubts about your particular machines contact the DVLA.

Limited Use Class

Any motor vehicle, from a moped up to a 44 tonne HGV, that you wish to use on the public road, may apply for exemption from the requirement for VED to be paid. Such vehicles are taxed and classified as Limited Use vehicles or 'vehicles used between different parts of land.'

A vehicle will fall within the scope of the Limited Use Class if:

- It is used for purposes relating to agriculture, horticulture or forestry; and
- It is used on public roads only in passing between different areas of land occupied by the same person; and
- The distance it travels on public roads in passing between any two such areas does not exceed 1.5 km.

Vehicles licensed in the Limited Use Class are issued with a license/tax disc which must be displayed on the vehicle. Application may be made at any time, and renewals are required at 12 month intervals.

If the conditions attached to the Limited Use Class are breached, then the vehicle ceases to be eligible for excise duty exemption and will become liable for payment of excise duty at the rate appropriate to the vehicle in question. **Use of rebated (red) diesel may also be illegal under such circumstances and if improperly used may be regarded as a breach of condition!**

Drivers of Limited Use vehicles must either hold a category N license or a license that covers the driving of the vehicle in question. The category N license covers vehicles which are exempt from excise duty due to travelling fewer than six miles a week.

This category was in use before 31 December 1996 but is now rarely used. However, if you were eligible to apply for a category N before 31 December 1996 you may still be granted such a license. The age limit will vary depending on the type of vehicle involved. For example, if the vehicle is an agricultural tractor, then the minimum age is 17; if it is a large heavy goods vehicle (HGV), it will be 21. However, there is no requirement to hold a large heavy goods vehicle vocational driving license for driving Limited Use heavy goods vehicles.

Limited Use vehicles are also exempt from annual testing under the HGV & MOT testing schemes provided they do not travel on the road more than six miles per week. However, they must comply with the relevant Construction and Use Regulations applicable to the class of vehicle, and its use, when used on the roads.

Operators of Limited Use HGVs do not require an operator's license subject to certain conditions.

Historic Vehicles Class

All private light goods (including buses used for voluntary, community or other non-profit making purposes), motor cycles and tricycles, special concessionary vehicles, special vehicles and private HGVs constructed before 1 January 1973 are exempt from VED if licensed in the Historic Vehicles class.

Although exempt from duty, it is still necessary to license annually, display a tax disc/nil license and provide an insurance certificate and valid MOT certificate (unless exempt) on application or renewal.

All vehicles licensed in the Historic Vehicles class continue to be subject to the requirement to license annually and display the tax disc, and on renewal of the vehicle license produce a valid MOT Test Certificate (if applicable) and a certificate of insurance.

For vehicles not previously licensed, and for which a license in the Historic Vehicles class is sought, the keeper will have to provide evidence of vehicle age on application, usually by providing the vehicle registration document.

Other Vehicles

Below is a guide to licensing some of the other vehicles that could be used by a golf club. Any vehicle could be licensed in the Limited Use class provided it meets the criteria described above.

The current VED rates for the various license classes are available from your local DVLA Office or on their website. In respect of any of these (and any others which may not be included) we recommend that advice is sought from the DVLA.

Special Vehicles

The Special Vehicles VED class includes digging machines, mobile cranes and works trucks with a weight over 3500 kg. Digging machines or mobile cranes may only be used on the public road for digging operations and in travelling to and from a place of work. They may not carry any load except other than what is necessary for its propulsion or equipment.

Works trucks are normally off-road vehicles, and are therefore very limited in how they can be used on-road. They may carry goods between private premises and a vehicle in the immediate vicinity, they can pass between one part of private premises to another, they can travel between a private premises and another in the immediate vicinity, or to or from a place connected with road works at or in the immediate vicinity of the site.

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)

If used on the road, an ATV must be registered and it must be licensed in the appropriate VED class according to the use being made of the vehicle. For use on the road, ATVs may be licensed in one of a number of classes. Vehicles that fall into the vehicle categories outlined below are exempt from duty but do have conditions attached to them.

Limited Use Class

Where the vehicle has only limited use on the road and is operated in compliance with the conditions attached to the class.

Private Light Goods Vehicle

Where on-road use, including carriage or haulage of non-agricultural goods, does not fall within any of the above categories they may be licensed in this category. Difficulty may be experienced in licensing new ATVs in this class due to the inability in obtaining a required MOT certificate after three years.

Motor Tricycle

Where the vehicle is three-wheeled and does not fall into the categories above.

Motorcycles

Motorcycles and tricycles are licensed at rates determined by engine capacity.

Vehicles Not Used On-Road

If the Club has a vehicle that was first licensed on or after 31 January 1998 and has since decided to surrender the licence or decided not to renew the licence, it is required to make a Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN) declaration. The declaration requires notification of the vehicle registration mark, make and model, and the address at which the vehicle is to be kept. When a vehicle is registered SORN, it cannot be kept or used on a public road. However, an untaxed vehicle can be driven on a public road to and from a pre-arranged MOT, VIC (vehicle identity check), approved weight or reduced pollution test, provided that adequate insurance cover for the use of that vehicle is in place. SORN declarations must be renewed each year.

For further information contact:

- *DVLA (Drivers), Customer Enquiries (Drivers) Unit, DVLA, Swansea SA6 7JL, tel: 0870 240 0009, fax: 01792 783071 email: drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk, or visit: www.dvla.gov.uk/drivers/drivers.htm or http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/index.htm.*
- *DVLA (Vehicles), Vehicle Customer Services (VCS), DVLA, Swansea SA99 1AR, tel: 0870 240 0010, fax: 0870 850 1285 email: vehicles.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk, or visit: http://www.dvla.gov.uk/vehicles.aspx or http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/index.htm.*
- *Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA), Berkeley House, Croydon, Street, Bristol BS5 0DA, tel: 0870 6060440, fax: 0117 9543212 or email: enquiries@vosa.gov.uk www.vosa.gov.uk*

Annual Review of Remuneration for Greenkeepers

In light of the current economic climate and the impact that this has on golf clubs throughout the UK, the Committee for Golf Club Salaries (CGCS) does not feel that it is appropriate to recommend any form of review to the salary scales currently in place to be effective for 2010.

The CGCS recommends that rates of pay remain a matter for negotiation between the individual employer and employee. The CGCS further considers that employers should make an appropriate pay award to recognise any substantial change in responsibility, qualifications or duties carried out by their employees as well as reflecting any changes to legislation governing rates of pay. Performance issues are also an important and relevant criteria in salary negotiation.

The Committee will meet early next year to review scales for 2011.

For further information visit: www.bigga.org.uk.

Can Golf Courses add Biodiversity to the Landscape?

Will Bowden** is the Programme Manager for Greenkeeping & Sports Turf at **Bridgwater College (Cannington Centre).

Within the United Kingdom there are approx. 2600 golf courses; the vast majority of these consist of inland/parkland settings. An average golf course covers 50-65Ha of land, making up 0.7% of the total UK land area. This is greater than the total land area occupied by RSPB reserves, country parks and local nature reserves. (Dair & Schofield 1990.)

From these statistics alone, it is clear that there is certainly the potential for golf courses to add biodiversity to the British landscape. It all comes down to responsible and sustainable stewardship and a holistic approach by the individual golf club to take ownership of its piece of Britain.

If we consider that on average 27% of the total area of the golf course comprises non-playing areas, then it is clear that with minimal resource or adverse effect to playing surfaces, golf clubs can indeed make a worthy contribution to local wildlife.

In fact the majority of UK courses are already making valuable contributions to local countryside. A study by The School of Biological Sciences, Royal Holloway University found that when compared, populations of birds and insect taxa on surveyed golf courses showed greater diversity and species richness than the nearby farmland; a fact that is hardly surprising when one considers the envy that many farmers and neighbouring nature reserves have for golf courses with regard to the relative time and resource the Club has to spend on its asset, compared to that of the average farmer or RSPB Warden looking after their 200 Ha with occasional voluntary or casual labour. However it is not simply a question of resource, it's about how you manage that resource, and influence the long-term sustainability of it.

Golf courses are in effect 'conserved environments'; they are not natural and are what would be described in ecological terms as temporary states of succession. However unnatural they appear to the non-playing bystander, this is what conservation is all about. We create and add diversity to a landscape by staggering the constant process of succession eg. woodland can be regressed to either parkland or precious heathland habitats, links land de-scrubbed and returned to sand dunes etc.

What can golf clubs do to improve their perception within the non-playing fraternity? In the case of the Global Anti-Golf Movement (GAGM) this is unlikely to ever be the case. They claim that golf clubs destroy habitats, deplete water resources and contaminate groundwater systems. Such allegations have some historical founding, but since the global community as a whole began to take responsibility for the natural planet, so has this sense of responsibility and stewardship developed in golf. This potential for ecological enhancement can be further developed through incorporating some of the following elements:

- Buffer zones: These are No-Spray/Low Maintenance areas of the golf course. Ideally incorporated/protecting riparian habitats and/or providing a boundary of natural grading along woodland verges. Buffer zones should be at least seven metres in depth and maintained so as to encourage diversity but not allow the habitat to degenerate.

- Base survey data: This is essential as a starting point for any worthwhile Environmental Management Policy (EMP). Base data should be collected over all four seasons. This does not need to be a scientific investigation – your Club' greenkeepers will know more about the flora and fauna of the site than anyone. It just needs recording and evidencing.

- Native plantings: Incorporation of only indigenous species is essential in the replanting of areas or restoration of degenerated habitats. Always ensure that native species of trees and shrubs etc. are used in any planting schemes. These have most value to local wildlife and are always best suited to your soil type and climate.

- Segmenting your site: It is impossible to develop an EMP that tackles ecological projects across your entire site with one project. Segmentation of your site ie. proportioning your land area up in to sections (A, B, C, D) allows you to address specific areas (on a 'bite size' basis) annually. This segmentation could equally be applied to habitat types ie. long rough (1) water habitat (2) woodland (3) and each year a project from one of these habitat zones is prioritised and addressed. Segmentation makes managing an EMP realistic and achievable.

- IPM and IWM: Integrated Pest Management and Integrated Weed Management: These policies are nothing new they simply

define austere turf management. However many golf courses in the UK suffered from what we refer to as 'the Augusta Syndrome' in the late 1980's and 1990's boom period, and as such lost sight of what we should truly value in terms of quality surfaces and perceived thresholds relating to disease and weed imperfections of the turf. It is worth remembering that 'natural' turf should be managed just as that; naturally, and as such there must inherently be allowance made for agreed imperfections whilst limiting unattainable expectations. Agree a Club policy that incorporates both IPM and IWM at its core.

Practical Tips:

• Dead wood: When removing hazardous trees, try to retain at least a 6ft stump, and stack any timber in a nearby location to create an 'Eco-Pile'. Wherever possible leave dead or dying trees to naturally degenerate.

• Open days: The mention of a Club open day is an intimidating thought to most private golf clubs. However this can be an excellent method in engaging with local communities and groups. It also has the proven potential to reduce vandalism, whilst also removing some of the political barriers and misconceptions that can often occur between the non-playing community and the golf club.

• Habitat restoration and replacement projects: It is not a significant drain on any golf clubs' resources to select one project/year on the golf course that focuses on either the restoration of a degenerating habitat, or replaces a lost or compromised habitat somewhere else on the site. Such projects can be the restoration of a woodland, the clearing of a water hazard or the planting of naturalised scrub/copse areas to replace lost corridors or valuable hedgerows.

Consider *Royal St. George's*; although a links, making comparison hard to draw alongside the majority of UK inland courses, the sentiments are relevant. *St. George's* is designated as a 'Beacon Club' for the way in which it manages sensitive habitats, with 11 rare orchid species being actively managed and protected, as well as dune systems and scrub clearance. Very often working with, rather than repelling, local government environmental organisations can enhance the long-term effectiveness of your Environmental Policies as well as safeguarding the best interests of your club. When forming an Environmental Policy at your Club employ the help of volunteers. At a time when resources are at their tightest and the prospect of outside hired/professional help is unlikely, then use the energy and enthusiasm that is within your Club. Involve in discussing projects SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed) objectives for effect across the golf course. In ensuring you follow these key elements you will be more likely to establish realistic and effective projects that will motivate members and staff long term.

Finally, investigate all possibilities relating to Government funding and grant schemes in your area. For example, one scheme run by Natural England is the Environmental Stewardship Scheme. This comprises many levels; however for smaller in-house projects the Entry Level in Stewardship may offer funding to any landowner who is enhancing the natural and/or culturally historical value of their site. Your golf club may well be entitled to such funding. Golf clubs do have enormous potential to enhance the biodiversity of the British landscape. One cannot over emphasise the importance of documenting everything you do in relation to ecological work and ensure that as many people as possible are aware of your efforts through local media and the internet. Through consistent and realistic achievement the stigma that surrounds golf and its adverse impact on the environment will be reduced, and the true value of the nations' golf clubs as custodians of the countryside appreciated.

For further information contact ***Will Bowden*** *at: www.tiscali.co.uk.*

Curse of the Lost Golf Balls

Golf balls are becoming a 'major litter problem', according to scientists who discovered it can take up to 1,000 years for one to decompose naturally.

In America, an estimated 300 million are lost each year.

When scientists searched the bottom of Loch Ness for evidence of the monster they were startled to discover hundreds of thousands of golf balls. Modern golf balls are basically rubber covered in a synthetic material. Scientists conducting a study for the Danish Golf Association found the balls released a high quantity of heavy metals during decomposition, including dangerous levels of zinc found in solid core balls.

When submerged in water, the zinc attached itself to sediments and poisoned the surrounding *flora* and *fauna*.

Daily Telegraph 12 November 2009.

Newsletters – Part 3

This final article in a short series on Club Newsletters looks at production tools and techniques.

The most effective Newsletters – those that inform, interest, attract and unite the Club's members and visitors – are those that appear on time, are attractive and easy to read. The following tips can make sure that they promote the Club's best interests.

Choose a distinctive, Club-oriented title

Newsletter success begins with the title that appears on the front page. Most often, the name of the Club followed by 'News' or 'Quarterly Newsletter' will be sufficient. A title consisting of a few short words is better than one containing several long words as it permits the use of a large type size. Instead of a long title, consider breaking the title into two parts; a short, key word set in a large type size supported by a longer subtitle set in a smaller type size which amplifies the meaning. Some experts go as far as suggesting the avoidance of 'empty' words such as 'newsletter' and 'the'. However, make sure that the name-plate emerges as a distinct visual element, quite separate from any headlines and text that follow.

Choose the correct margins and column layout

White space is the inexpensive and easy way to make Newsletters more attractive and easier to read. There should be generous, but not excessive, margins and sufficient 'breathing space' at the top and bottom of each page. Consider leaving some columns blank. If using a 3-column layout, try omitting text from the first column and devoting it to photos or quotes. If there are to be many photographs, include a 'scholar's margin' – a narrow column along the outside edge which builds white space into the page and provides room for a variety of different-sized photographs. Small pictures can fit entirely within the scholar's margin; others can extend into it from the adjacent text columns.

Make headlines easy to locate and read

Headlines are crucial and should be edited to their minimum… and then again! A one-line headline looks better and reads more easily than a two- or three-line one. Again, use white space to make the headlines more effective; it acts like a magnet, drawing the reader's eyes to the headline. White space above separates it from preceding text, and consistency is once again very important. Choose a single typeface for all the headlines and limit them to two sizes; a larger one for headlines of primary importance. This adds variety to the page and enables readers to identify the most important topics. Headlines should stand out by the use of a typeface that forms a strong visual contrast with the adjacent body of text. For example, try using *sans serif* headlines in Helvetica to introduce text that is set in a *serif* typeface such as Times Roman.

Insert frequent subheadings

These add visual interest to the articles and make them easier to read by breaking long expanses of text into manageable, bite-sized chunks. Each subheading provides readers with a convenient entry or re-entry point into the article. Readers are quite likely to skim the subheadings and begin reading when they encounter something that attracts their interest! To succeed, they must contrast with the text they introduce. The best result is often achieved by setting subheadings in the same typeface as the headlines, but smaller. Placing more space above subheadings than below them will emphasis the break between topics.

Make body copy as easy to read as possible

The message will best emerge by using a typeface that does not draw undue attention to itself. Whenever possible, choose a familiar *serif* typeface because studies have shown that they (eg. Garamond, Palatino, Times Roman) are easier to read than *sans serif* typefaces such as Helvetica. Next, consider setting the main text flush-left/ragged-right. Flush-left alignment is characterized by equal word spacing and lines of unequal line length. This creates interesting pools of white space at the end of each line which further opens-up each line. The equal word spacing allows readers to establish a rhythm, making their job easier.

Choose the right punctuation and spacing

Readers will tend to gauge professionalism and the ability to satisfy their needs by the way subtle details such as punctuation and spacing are handled. For example, avoid hitting the Enter/Return key twice after paragraphs as this creates distracting horizontal bands of white space between paragraphs. Instead, use the paragraph formatting command to create Space After, equal to one and one-half lines of text. With regard to quotation marks, hyphens, etc, word-processing software may have its own idea of what is right, but it is far better to have a standard editorial approach and stick with it. Try to use non-breaking spaces to avoid splitting proper nouns such as the names of a golf club or a competition winner across two lines. In many cases, this will mean editing or transposing words earlier in the paragraph to avoid awkward word/line breaks.

Align visuals with column boundaries

Avoid photographs that straddle two columns or extend into adjacent columns. These create text wraps; narrow columns characterised by awkward word spacing and excessive hyphenation. Aligning photographs with column boundaries emphasises the structure of the Newsletter and makes it easier to read.

Provide meaningful and readable captions

Use captions not only to identify the content and importance of each photograph or diagram, but also to explain their relationship to the adjacent text. Captions should be as easy to read as the main text. Consider setting captions in a contrasting typeface which will help them to stand apart from adjacent body copy.

Use colour with restraint

Restraint should be exercised when adding secondary colour as colour itself should be concentrated in a few key locations such as the Club's logo. Colour often works best as a background element, rather than a foreground one (ie. the text). Avoid using different colours in each issue as this often confuses readers. It destroys issue-to-issue unity and familiarity, makes the production job harder and can increase printing costs. The different text and visuals on the front cover of each issue should be enough to differentiate each issue.

Pay full attention to detail

It is essential to correct all errors, especially the simple ones. Although word-processing and page layout programs offer many advanced capabilities, they differ in their ability to handle problems such as widows and orphans. These are lines, or sentence fragments, isolated at the top or bottom of pages or columns and include the unfortunate incidence of where a subheading appears by itself at the bottom of a page, separated from the paragraph that it is introducing at the top of the next page!

Simplify the design

Strive for simplicity. Eliminate unnecessary boxes, borders and rules. Use a single headline typeface and type size throughout each headline and avoid the temptation to use too much bold or too many italics within the text. Clutter always detracts from the message, and every change in typography, colour or layout lessens the reader's ability to concentrate.

Continued from page 8

At this time we use our understanding of plant growth strategies to play on the strengths and weaknesses of the different species. The browntop bents and fine fescues have developed a far greater ability to withstand an element of stress than the annual meadow grass. None are true stress-tolerators, so don't apply too much stress for too long or the favoured species might also suffer. Use stress in a short-term and controlled fashion to weaken the annual meadow grass without damaging the bents and fescues and then take advantage of the situation by overseeding.

We do have different forms of stress to play with. Constraining water and nutrient availability (and promoting soil acidity) can all be used to exert a positive selection pressure onto the sward. Be very careful though because extreme stress can directly damage the desired species and it can also encourage disturbing disease and pest attacks. The safest method in the UK is to restrict water availability for a short time at the end of the summer. The finer grasses are naturally strong in this area and will be able to cope. This can be used on the run up to overseeding and then quickly eased afterwards to aid establishment.

Restricting fertiliser inputs can also help weaken the annual meadow grass but should not be used at the expense of recovery. After stress we need to take advantage of the situation quickly. We can use gentle acidification stress with the use of ammonium sulphate based fertilisers. Just take the annual meadow grass out of its comfort zone while keeping the finer grasses within theirs. Manage environmental pressure to select the desired species.

Interestingly at this stage we do not want to use products that improve the stress tolerance of the annual meadow grass. A constant reliance on phosphate fertilisers should be avoided for this reason. We must also ensure that the soil doesn't become water repellent by being dried out too much. In this phase we hasten the development of the finer grasses by taking opportunities to push the annual meadow grass out and then overseeding to take the open ground.

You know you have reached the end of this stage when you are more concerned about preventing annual meadow grass invasion than forcing it out.

Phase 4: Prevent Invasion

When we achieve a dominance of the finer grasses (or indeed have started with a newly established one) the objective is to prevent deterioration in the form of annual meadow grass invasion. Annual meadow grass's reproductive strategy is second to none and it produces seemingly magical seeds that can find and take advantage of any sward openings and at any time of the year. Knowing this we must work to minimise the formation of gaps within the sward and also make the turf base unattractive for the germination and establishment of annual meadow grass seedlings.

In this phase we maintain the development of a dense and healthy sward with the appropriate use of fertiliser and irrigation inputs and with the use of plant growth regulators. We must try to prevent direct damage to the sward by managing wear properly and by being vigilant with our pest, disease and dry patch control strategies. We should not contribute to any form of thinning by keeping unduly aggressive treatments to a minimum. We continue to overseed to fill any gaps that do appear. The regular top dressing using an appropriate sandy material will have served to create a dry and sandy turf base that is not favourable to the successful germination and establishment of annual meadow grass seedlings. The use of sulphate of ammonia-based feeds will have acidified the seedbed to help in the same way.

Of course we must continue to manage the soil profile. Continue to spike or prick as necessary to keep the surface receptive to water infiltration, to aerate the soil profile and to allow the integration of top dressing as needed. Take care by using the most effective and least harmful method. Annual meadow grass will invade at times so we need to revert to the methods learnt in Phase 3 to push it back out again. Use appropriate stress without it becoming too damaging.

You are now managing the natural ebb and flow of sward species composition. You are successfully handling the tricky environmental balance that favours the development of the bents and fescues over the annual meadow grass. You have reached the high ground and you have got here by taking nothing for granted. You have stayed focused on achieving your goal. When does it end?

Fra-dumph tshhhhh

So, this is where the The Disturbance Theory ended up. How did we do? Are you thinking about your greenkeeping in a different way or left cold by it all? Doesn't matter now. Just know that sward species development is about creating a favourable environmental balance and understand that you can influence proceedings. The different species will respond to *your* environment, so manage the one that you need. Above all, do it in a way that continues to make the surfaces better and better no matter what. In the end we just hope that the greens become your Pride and the golfer's Joy.

Forgive us for the mistakes and the gaps but we think that enough is enough. Thanks to **Megan Hood** (NZSTI) for joining in and helping.

Richard Windows *and* ***Henry Bechelet*** *are advisory agronomists at the Sports Turf Research Institute, Bingley. They may be contacted by email at disturbance.theory@stri.co.ukforfeedback (Subject: I think your mistakes are….).* ***Megan Hood*** *may be contacted at: nzsti.org.nz.*

The Golf Club Secretary – 14th Open Championship

We would like to thank everyone who has participated in the Championship in 2009, both competitors and supporters. It has been a very successful year with record entries – please continue to support those that make the Championship possible:

CCV Underwriting Sports & Leisure
Eagle Promotions
Golf Monthly
Jonas Clubminder
Majestic Crystal

NOTICEBOARD

R&A Update

Following a two year review with the USGA, **The R&A** has announced 30 new Decisions, 49 Revised Decisions and one decision has been withdrawn, for the 2010-2011 *Decisions on the Rules of Golf*. The changes will take effect on **1st January 2010**.

*The book is available for £15.99 from **The R&A,** visit: www.randa.org or tel: 01334 460000.*

The R&A has also announced that it is not changing its ruling on the use of distance measuring devices. They will continue to be allowed to be used to measure distance only, but not other conditions such as wind speed or direction, the slope of the ground or the temperature.

In advance of the changes in the Rules of Golf relating to grooves, which come into effect on **1st January 2010, The R&A** has developed an online club database. This is a searchable database of all irons and wedges, as well as hybrids and fairway woods with lofts of 25 degrees or higher, which were in production prior to **1st January 2010** and which have been submitted to, and for evaluation by, either **The R&A** or the **USGA**.

For further information visit the Rules section at: www.randa.org.

STRI Update

In 2009 STRI began to look at ways to measure greens in an 'objective' way, rather than subjective, and ran a pilot study across 86 golf clubs to work out the best way to do this.

As a result of this pilot study, STRI has developed the tools and methodology to provide golf courses with a new service **'The STRI Programme'**, to complement its existing course appraisal and advisory service.

This new and innovative programme has been developed to improve both the playing quality and consistency of performance on golf greens.

Clubs trialling the new programme have been delighted with the results. The new service gives them objective information on how their greens are performing and enables them to make informed decisions regarding the maintenance of their greens, to achieve more consistent greens and better playing quality for their members.

For further information visit: www.stri.co.uk.

Foremost Golf

From **January 2010**, Foremost Golf will provide all of its golf professionals with a website and email marketing service free of charge. This will include the maintenance of all content, product updates and product catalogues for the brand which the individual professional selects.

For further information visit: www.foremostgolf.com.

Golf Foundation Update

From **1st January 2010** the Golf Foundation will deliver all of its activity under the banner of 'Golf Roots'.

For further information visit: www.golf-foundation.org.

The Open Championship 2010

The Open Championship 2010 will take place at St Andrews between **15th-18th July**. Only four tickets per category per day may be purchased.

Greenside Club ticket including car park.....£600

Greenside Club ticket excluding car park.....£550

(Greenside Club tickets were previously known as Composite tickets).

17th Green reserved grandstand (must be used in conjunction with a ticket permitting course access).....£240

1st Tee/18th Green reserved grandstand (sold out) (must be used in conjunction with a ticket permitting course access).....£240

Season tickets
Admission to the course for the week of Sunday 11th July to Sunday 18th July
– payment before 31st January 2010.....£200

Daily tickets, practice days

Adults
Sunday 11th July.....£15
Monday 12th July.....£25
Tuesday 13th July.....£30
Wednesday 14th July.....£40

Concessions (65 and over)
Sunday 11th July.....£10
Monday 12th July.....£15
Tuesday 13th July.....£25
Wednesday 14th July.....£30

Concessions (16-21 years old)
Sunday 11th July.....£5
Monday 12th July.....£15
Tuesday 13th July.....£15
Wednesday 14th July.....£20

Daily tickets, Championship days

Adults
Thursday 15th July to Sunday 18th July inclusive.....£60

Concessions (65 and over)
Thursday 15th July to Sunday 18th July inclusive.....£45

Concessions (16-21 years)
Thursday 15th July to Sunday 18th July inclusive.....£25

Weekly Car Parking.....£50

Once again, mobile phones will be banned from the whole course.

*For further information and group bookings contact: Ticket Office, **The R&A,** St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9JD, tel: 01334 460000, fax: 01334 460002 or email: tickets@randa.org.*

On Course

Richard Windows and Henry Bechelet,
Turfgrass Agronomists, STRI

Pride and Joy

The last part of the final article in the occasional series on Disturbance Theory.

Phase 1: Lay the Foundation

The first leg of your journey is the starting point for most. Putting surfaces with annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*) dominance, an organic matter rich turf base and less than ideal drainage. Playing qualities can be variable throughout the year and the surfaces are vulnerable to extremes of weather and disease attack. You want to change the nature of your greens. Your primary objectives at this stage are to improve drainage and reduce the organic matter content of the soil profile. This will immediately improve playing qualities especially through the winter. It will also create an environment where the finer grasses can start to flourish.

Try to get through this stage as quickly as possible so spend your energy informing your Club and the players of your intentions. Explain the procedure and sell the benefits of success. Tell them that if carried out correctly this stage won't last forever. Better greens for longer in the year is a fairly compelling objective for most golfers and golf clubs.

If your underlying drainage is really poor you need to be thinking pipe drainage or even green reconstruction. Work against the organic matter by hollow tining (with big enough tines) or deep scarification, integrate top dressing and aerate like mad. Don't worry about disturbance at this stage because there is nothing to save. Ensure you change the reason for the thatch accumulation in the first place by amending the previous fertiliser or irrigation programme.

If shade is a problem then thin or remove the trees (under guidance of an ecologist or tree expert).

Turn the situation around as quickly as possible to keep the golfers happy. Sample organic matter content through the soil profile to monitor progress and to review the success of the methods being employed. Work towards specific targets.

You complete this stage when you have created a surface with an open aspect that is founded upon a sandy and free draining soil. The greens are already better and now you can start thinking seriously about changing the grass types.

Phase 2: Manage the Environment

With the foundation placed you can start with the **art** of greenkeeping. Changing the sward species composition to establish the Browntop bents and fescues requires subtle management of the environment. Here we begin overseeding in earnest and setting the environment required to shepherd the seedlings into established plants. We also want to allow the established plants to flourish. This is achieved by preparing the surfaces in a different way.

Our knowledge of the plant growth strategies tells us that constant damage (disturbance) will favour the annual meadow grass while the finer grasses prefer more settled conditions. We reduce the need for aggressive treatments with the judicious use of fertiliser and irrigation inputs to keep growth and thatch production under control. We begin preparing the surfaces through top dressing, brushing, rolling and less aggressive mowing and verticutting to keep disturbance pressure to a minimum. We continue to aerate to maintain the optimal soil conditions but without it being detrimental. We still provide firm, fast, smooth and true surfaces for the golfers to enjoy but we start doing it in a different and less damaging way.

Successful overseeding requires you to be pernickety. Use quality seed and apply it at the correct rate when there is a chance of success. Be sure to place the seed to the correct depth (with soil contact) and give it enough space to come through. Hold back the competition from the existing sward before overseeding with the use of plant growth regulators. Manage the establishment considerately to give the new seedlings a chance to take hold. A healthy and settled environment with minimal stress is the order of the day. Stress is no good for new seedlings so ease the pressure from the environment.

This tends to be the longest phase but it isn't endless. Take heart that you have already improved the situation beyond recognition through Phase 1. As the finer grasses establish and assume dominance your mind will start thinking about hastening the process by stressing the annual meadow grass out. You should only move to the next stage when you are sure that you can lose the annual meadow grass without losing playing quality beyond the patience of the players. Think hard before moving on.

Phase 3: Pressure the *Poa*

This is the phase where we start playing with the pressures. Through Phase 2 you will have become attuned to the idea of managing environmental pressures and through this stage you will start to employ that understanding in a more forceful way. The objective here is to force the annual meadow grass out. Through this phase we are still looking to favour the fine grasses so our surface preparations remain focused on minimising disturbance. We continue to prepare our surfaces primarily with top dressing, brushing and rolling (with occasional verticutting only as necessary) but also look for the chance to use stress against the annual meadow grass.

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