

Golf Course Policy Document

January 2011

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy document is to set out details of the management of the golf course at Clays Golf Club, which have been approved by the Directors/Council and made freely available to all members to keep them informed. This is to be used as a working document. Any future revisions must be approved by Management after due consideration.

Clays Golf Club was established in 1991 and opened as a driving range. It soon became apparent that the need for another golf course was essential in the Wrexham area. By 1995 Clays had established itself as an 18 hole golf course with a new build club house, pro shop and bar and restaurant. Set in some 110 acres of delightful North East Wales open countryside, the course has undergone many changes in subsequent years and still continues to develop. Most recently, in 2007, Clays was accredited as being only one of 4 venues in Wales, to become recognised as a "Centre of Excellence" for our overall facilities in regard to practice and coaching, due to the extensive investment programme undertaken by Clays and the Sports Council of Wales.

On course enhancements have included new tees, planting schemes, new bunkers and ongoing evolution of the golf course. Finally, in 2010 with the guidance of the Ryder Cup Committee, Clays embarked on creating a 'mini golf course', which has been branded, "Just Your Putter", with the proactive thinking to encourage a new format of golf and encourage new people to the game.

Clays is a parkland golf course. Every hole presents its own particular challenge to all levels of players. This has to be protected and where appropriate, improved for the benefit of the Club's members and visitors, present and future. Continuity of policy is essential in golf club management, and nowhere is this more important than on the golf course.

Many of the problems inherent in golf course management were addressed by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club (R&A) in its publication "The Way Forward". One of its key recommendations was that Clubs should formulate and publish their own Course Management Policy document, working to a five-year plan at least. This approach has been strongly endorsed by both the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) and the Golf Union of Wales (GUW). To ensure such long-term policy is put into effect, it is essential, therefore, that a Course Management Policy document should be drawn up, and approved by the Management and the Council.

2. Aim

The aim of a Course Management Policy document is to set out details of the management of the golf course and any associated lands of Clays Golf Club, in order to implement a structured and clear forward plan and to promote good communication.

3. Roles & Responsibilities

3.1 General

The management of the course involves a wide range of people and it is essential, therefore, that their

roles and responsibilities are clearly defined at the outset.

3.2 The Council

The Council is responsible for the overall direction of the members' handicapping and competitions within the Club, also teams representing the Club, at home and away events, forward fixture policy, social events within the membership and financial control of its own section.

3.3. The Directors Committee

The Directors Committee is responsible for the management of the golf course, course maintenance, course standards and improvements, recommending any significant course changes, the submission of annual budgets, as well as long-term capital expenditure plans and projects.

3.4 General Manager

The General Manager should establish management controls to ensure that the policies laid down by the Directors Committee are implemented and that the in-year Course Budget and Capital Expenditure Programme are monitored, including any major variations approved by the Directors Committee.

3.5 The Head Greenkeeper

The Head Greenkeeper is responsible, in conjunction with the General Manager, for the implementation of the Policy in all its aspects, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Planning maintenance schedules in relation to fixture lists and Societies
- Liaising with the General Manager on any problem areas
- Machinery maintenance and repair
- Planning and preparation of annual and long-term budgets
- Attending all meetings and reporting on agenda items
- Maintenance of schedules and records relating to machinery and staff
- Personal education – training, discipline, allocation of daily tasks
- Implementation of the Club's Health & Safety Policy
- Purchase and storage of fertilisers, dressings, pesticides, fungicides and chemicals
- Storage and safety of all equipment and materials
- Ecology

4. Resources

4.1 Staff

The indicative staffing level includes the following:

- Head Greenkeeper
- Deputy Greenkeeper
- Greenkeepers 1-2
- Trainee/Apprentice Greenkeeper 1-2
- Temporary Summer Assistant(s)

This profile is considered adequate at the moment, but with ever increasing demands on course presentation, coupled with more rounds of golf per year, the Club may need to consider changing this number.

The Directors Committee shall undertake an annual salary review for all staff.

4.2 Finance

The Directors are committed to the allocation of sufficient funds to achieve the policies set out in this document.

4.3 Greenkeeping Facilities

The existing facilities are situated adjacent to the clubhouse and consist of:-

- General store room and drying room
- Workshop/grinding room
- Main area housing most of the Club's machinery
- General purpose and materials storage

Additional facilities are situated adjacent to the greenkeeping sheds and consist of:-

- A wash down area for machines

These facilities do have planning consent on them to be upgraded and moved which the Directors Committee are committed to do within the Capital Expenditure Programme.

4.4 Machinery & Equipment

The Directors Committee regards the provision of the necessary machinery and equipment as an essential pre-requisite in achieving the policies set out in this document. This programme will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Additionally, as part of the annual depreciation exercise, all equipment will be reviewed and disposals made as necessary.

4.5 Training

Training is an essential element in achieving a well-trained and motivated staff. Clays Golf Club is committed to help and encourage training and education through approved Colleges. All permanent Greenstaff are encouraged to obtain National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ's) in greenkeeping to the maximum of their individual abilities. Staff are also encouraged to become members of BIGGA and to attend discussion groups organised by this Association.

5. Objectives

The objectives will necessarily alter as the years progress. The objectives are, that Clays Golf Club should retain its position as one of the best maintained and enjoyable courses in North East Wales. The aim is to achieve good playing conditions all year round, taking into account weather conditions. It is to

be maintained in excellent condition for the enjoyment of members and visitors.

6. Timing of Work on the Course

6.1 General

Much essential work has to be completed before a certain time each day and within certain timescales during the year. Moreover, there are times when play on the course will have to be restricted to allow the Greenstaff to “set-up the course” for special events. As far as possible these restrictions will be kept to an absolute minimum.

During winter months a policy of closing individual holes may occasionally be adopted, in order to permit essential work to be carried out uninterrupted. It will be the aim of the General Manager and the Head Greenkeeper to plan essential course work, including the Winter Programme, well in advance. Members will be kept informed via the notice board and website of any essential work and restrictions on play. The co-operation and understanding of members and visitors will, however, be required if the Club is to maintain the present high standards, as well as seeking to achieve longer-term improvements. Greenstaff shall have priority on the course at all times.

6.2. Hours of Work

The Greenstaff work a flexible shift pattern depending upon the time of year and the available light:

March to October

- 6.00 a.m - 3.00 p.m. - half an hour for meal break, though this may vary for big events.

November to February

- 7.00 a.m. - 2.00 p.m. – half an hour for meal break

Additionally, all staff are rostered for weekend and public holiday working, at the appropriate overtime rates, to provide for hole and tee marker changes, bunker raking and greens mowing. In each playing season approximately 6/8 events will be identified and agreed when all members of the Greenstaff will be required to work, in order to present the competition course at its best.

7. The Course

Priority on the Course

7.1 General

The course is laid out on soil structures ranging from sand through loamy humus and clay, generally overlaying free draining sandy substructure. Some areas cannot withstand very wet conditions and are prone to surface lying water. These areas are adversely affected by traffic caused by heavy use, particularly golf buggies and trolleys.

Compaction has occurred in some areas around the course. The agreed policy will be to relieve

compaction by intense aeration programmes and to avoid further compaction in the winter months when the grass has stopped growing, by restricting the use of buggies and trolleys and diverting traffic. Any such restrictions will only be imposed when it is deemed absolutely necessary. Special care must be taken to observe the rules laid out for crossing the roadway between the fourth and thirteenth holes.

7.2 Tees

Good maintenance of teeing grounds is essential. A rolling programme of renovation and levelling will be maintained. Tining, scarifying and fertilising are all undertaken on a programmed basis. The use of winter tees is a long-term objective, which will be continued. This enables the tees to recover better for the spring. The day-to-day maintenance of the teeing grounds is part of the overall strategy and routine duties must include:-

- Movement of tee markers two to four times a week
- Emptying of rubbish bins two times a week and when full
- Divotting of any major damage
- Twice weekly cutting of all tees at appropriate heights, ensuring care is taken not to scalp the sloping edges of the tees.
- Trimming of the tee markers and wooden rails
- Regular inspection and spot spraying for weeds
- Aeration and scarification

7.3 Fairways

The fairways have shown marked improvement in recent years following annual spraying and aeration programmes. There are still a number of areas where a continued programme of verti-draining, deep tining, slit tining and scarification will be maintained to effect improvement to both drainage and growth and to improve the quality of the grass sward.

Spot and/or boom spraying for weed and other infestation is to be undertaken at least annually, to ensure the best quality and consistency of the surface. Cutting to a height in the region of 12 – 15mm is to be continued. The use of fertilisers and dressings on the fairways is not normally necessary. A policy of regular scarification and divotting is carried out throughout the year.

7.4 Surrounds & Approches

To prevent the green surrounds and approaches from being infested with poor quality grasses, they will receive a similar aeration and feed treatment programme as the greens. The presentation of the surrounds of greens, tees and approaches, has a marked visual impact on the course. A surround will be formed of one triple machine width around each green and four to five cuts at the front. This will then merge into the fairway. Careful cutting of the surrounds is essential to avoid scalping and to achieve an even surface.

7.5 Semi-Rough/Rough

The semi-rough will normally be cut to a height in the region of 35mm. This should enable the ball to remain visible, yet slowing it down. Rough will be cut to a height in the region of 100mm. Other areas of rough, identified as being well off-line, will be left in their natural state, for ecological and biodiverse

reasons. In this respect, Clays Golf Club will seek expert help, from the appointed Agronomist, from time to time.

7.6 Greens

Annual meadow grass is the predominant species of grass on most greens. The long-term policy is to reduce this gradually and encourage bent grasses to develop and thrive. This objective cannot be achieved quickly, whilst still maintaining greens in a good state of play. This long-term objective can be achieved, however, by a continual programme of aeration, scarification, top dressing and over-seeding, to create conditions which encourages the deeper rooting species of grasses to thrive.

The height of cut on greens is the responsibility of the Head Greenkeeper and depends upon his reading of future weather conditions, forthcoming events and the state of the soil etc. During spells of good growing weather, the effective height of cut should be no lower than 3.75mm (rising to 6.8mm during the winter months).

Scarification and verti-cutting will be undertaken throughout the summer, together with the use of tining, to encourage the moisture penetration and the deeper rooting grasses. Members are asked to show patience when this work interrupts playing surfaces and to be rest assured that the work is being done of necessity and at the most appropriate times of the year, to ensure the best and quickest recovery of the course.

Judicious use of the irrigation system, coupled with some hand-watering, is essential in relation to the prevailing climatic conditions, being mindful however, to use as little water as possible. Watering will not, however, be used as a means of creating artificial holding conditions for balls being played onto greens, which is contrary to policy. Similarly, hand-watering should be the first line of action when tackling stress through drought. A structured programme of aeration throughout the year, using a combination of verti-draining, tining (slit, core) and scarification, is essential to reduce compaction and the build-up of thatch. To assist with the maintenance of fast and true putting surfaces therefore, regular top dressing is crucial during the growing season.

7.7 Draining and Ditches

The dispersal of water from the course and good drainage are of paramount importance. All ditches are regularly examined and have to be kept free of debris and silt. During the summer months the banks are cut and cleared and the sludge is removed to ensure the free flow of water and to prevent flooding, as far as possible. Other underground drains on fairways are to be examined and blockages cleared, to ensure the free flow of water off the course. Old drains are liable to collapse and may need to be totally replaced.

7.8 Bunkers & Hazards

This is an area that has received considerable improvement and upgrading over recent winter programmes. A sustained programme of re-furbishment will be continued, to include drainage where necessary. The definition of bunker margins must be maintained so that golfers are in no doubt as to whether or not they are in the hazard. Bunker fringes should be edged and trimmed to a height that will permit a ball to be gathered into the hazard. Regular deep raking is essential to maintain a consistent

depth of sand. To facilitate consistency of texture and playing characteristics, “Moneystone” bunker sand will be used in all bunkers. Each bunker is to have its own rake. Rakes should be placed inside bunkers.

7.9 Other Natural Habitats

From the wide open wilderness to biodiverse wetlands, from urban green space to the golf course, living landscapes directly influence our quality of life, by its very nature, Clays can enhance landscapes and ecosystems, creating and sustaining beautiful and biologically rich open spaces, and the policy makes a significant contribution to the resilience of the natural world.

7.10 The Practice Facilities

The Club’s practice facilities have been mentioned by a number of industry experts in recent years, as being world class and we pride ourselves as being proactive and innovative within this area. The ongoing policy for practice and coaching reflects our ethos of delivering a first class service to members and visitors to encourage improvement and enjoyment.

The facilities include an automated driving range with 20 bays, the short game area, again 20 bays, with 3 Huxley drop and stop artificial greens, two real greens with bunkers and sloping lies, an indoor and outdoor putting green and two indoor ‘state of the art’ coaching studios. The care of all the practice areas is the responsibility of the Head Greenkeeper.

7.11 Paths and Tracks

The policy should be that, wherever possible, all paths leading to and from teeing areas should be grass. Where, because of unavoidable traffic patterns, this is not possible, artificially surfaced paths should be constructed. Artificial paths should be kept free of weeds.

7.12 Temporary Greens

It is the Club’s policy not to have temporary greens. The option of closing certain holes, particularly during the winter months, will only be considered as a last resort.

Considerations are:-

- Is the normal green too soft to take foot traffic
- Due to a health and safety issue
- If the normal green is being worked on intensively, a temporary green may be brought into use in order that the work may proceed more quickly, with greater productivity

8. Fertilisation and Chemicals

The Club are dedicated to follow an ethical and environmental procurement policy, which in turn, will look at the environmental impact that chemicals and fertilisers have on the well being of the golf course and our plan is to reduce the impact these have on our environment, without comprising the quality of the golf course.

9. Top Dressing

Top dressing to greens will take place during the playing season. Total dressings on greens approximate to 60 - 80 tonnes per year, comprising of 80/20 sand/sand soil mix. Top dressings are also applied to tees, surrounds and selected fairway areas. These quantities may vary slightly from year to year, dependant upon weather conditions and the golfing calendar.

10. Closing the Course

The course may be closed on the authority of the General Manager or, in his absence,

the Head Greenkeeper on duty, when unusual weather conditions have occurred and damage to the course would result, if play were permitted. Such conditions would only exist if the greens were waterlogged, or if the course was totally flooded.

During a competition, the course may be closed by the General Manager, the manager on duty or an authorised member of the Directors Committee, supervising the competition, if they consider that the course has become unsuitable for play, due to any reason, such as flooding, thunder/lightning, or any other reason. The Council Committee will ensure that competitors are made aware of this advice. This advice is designed to be of help and guidance. Clays Golf Club is not liable for any damage or injury caused by the following of this advice. A decision to re-open the course may be taken at any time after an inspection, by an authorised person, who will ensure that it is safe to resume play.

The following signals will be used to announce decisions:

- Suspension of play – one prolonged air horn blast (repeated)
- Resumption of play – two short air horn blasts (repeated)
- Cancellation of play – four short air horn blasts (repeated)

When play is suspended, if the players in a match or group are between the play of two holes, they shall not resume play until a resumption of play has been signalled. If they are in the process of playing a hole, they shall discontinue play immediately and shall not thereafter resume play, until a resumption of play has been signalled. If a player fails to discontinue play immediately, they shall be disqualified, unless circumstances warrant waiving such a penalty, as provided in Rule 33-7.

On signal for suspension of play being given, competitors should proceed to the nearest shelter or vacate the course. However, if the suspension is due to the proximity of an electric storm, golfers or caddies should leave clubs well away from where they are sheltering. They should **NOT**: walk or shelter under trees; stand on high ground; shelter in any building with a metal roof; put up an umbrella; use a mobile phone. They should keep as low as possible, if necessary crouching in the nearest bunker.

Resumption of play will be signalled by two blasts of the air horn. Competitors, sheltering in the Clubhouse, will be informed that play will be resumed shortly and will be given sufficient time, from this notification of the two blasts of the air horn, to reach the point on the golf course, where they were when play was suspended. When competitors have been given chance to get back to where they were, when play was suspended, the air horn will be sounded (two short blasts). No competitor shall resume

play until the two air horn blasts have been blown. Failure to comply shall lead to the competitor being disqualified – Rule 6.8b.

11. Greenstaff & Members

11.1 Work on the course

The increase in the popularity of golf, coupled with earlier retirement, has resulted in members and visitors playing more and wishing to play earlier. The golfer of today is much more aware of the quality and presentation of the course and demands constant improvements in the playing surfaces on a year round basis. The Greenstaff are faced with ever increasing levels of compaction, wear and tear and the need to work without inconveniencing the golfer. Improved mechanisation has assisted the Greenkeeper to carryout most tasks quickly and efficiently, but inevitably there are conflicts between the Greenkeeper and the golfer. The staff are aware that the course is there for the benefit and enjoyment of members and visitors and work programmes are planned accordingly.

To achieve the best possible balance:-

- Staff start early enough to prepare the course by working ahead of the golfers
- Course closures are planned well in advance to ensure that a full course is available.

This has the added advantage of increased productivity, as staff can work without interruption. Additionally, other closures are necessary when preparing for major club competitions and/or major open events. Our Greenstaff take great pride in their professional workmanship and their presentation of the course. Golfers can help by a little thought and by adhering to the following:

ALWAYS REPAIR ANYTHING YOU SEE – EVEN IF YOU DID NOT DO IT YOURSELF

- “Please Repair Pitch Marks” – This is a continuing problem, particularly after weekend play
- “Please Rake Bunkers” – Push the sand towards the bunkers faces, do not pull it to the rear. It is no excuse if there is no rake available, a club can always be used
- “Please Replace Bunker Rakes” - Rakes should be replaced inside bunkers
- “Please Replace Divots” – Whilst not all replaced divots take, a high percentage do and thus help the course recover more quickly
- “Pick Up Any Litter” – Take it and discard it in the nearest bin. There is one by every third tee
- “Buggies, Electric and Pull Trolleys” – Do not take them on to tees, greens, green approaches and surrounds and between bunkers and greens

11.2. Complaints

Members and visitors may not, under any circumstances, complain about the conduct of a member of Staff, nor about the state of the course, to any member of the Greenstaff. Any complaint must be made to the General Manager, who will investigate the matter, together with the Directors Committee and the Head Greenkeeper.

12. Machinery

The policy of the Club is to purchase, maintain and replace, when necessary, the best and most

appropriate range of machinery and equipment, for the upkeep of the course.

The Club has invested in a range of specialist machinery and equipment to ensure the continuing high standards of course maintenance. It is essential, therefore, that the Head Greenkeeper, in consultation with the General Manager, maintains a rolling 10 year capital plan of machinery replacements, additions, repairs and renewals for consideration. This plan should be updated annually and approved by the Directors Committee. The Head Greenkeeper has a responsibility to keep himself up-to-date with developments in golf, course machinery and to bring his recommendations to the notice of the General Manager, including competitive quotations, for the acquisition and disposal of machinery.

The Head Greenkeeper is also responsible for the maintenance of all machinery, in all its aspects, including all health and safety requirements, as well as records of use, preventative maintenance, major servicing, adjustments, etc. He will recognise the heavy investment that has been made out of the Club funds and prudently preserve these investments.

13. Irrigation

13.1 General

The overall policy is to use as little water as possible to encourage deeper rooting grasses to predominate. However, almost every season there are times when rainfall is insufficient to sustain grass growth and needs to be supplemented. Water is also needed on demand to wash in fertilisers and other treatments. Therefore a guaranteed water source is essential for the maintenance of a golf course.

13.2. Water Supply

The irrigation system is fed from off the main water supply. We also have the use of a natural water spring that is present on the 7th hole, the water has been tested and is full of quality natural nutrients that is healthy for the course.

14. Ecology

Clays Golf course contains a mixture of parkland and natural woodland areas within the perimeter of the course. It is an important part of the policy to preserve the natural habitat of birds, animals and flora on the course. There are a number of breeding pairs of geese on the course. Woodland maintenance will be carried in such a way that it has as little impact on the natural habitat as possible and encourage wildlife. Certain animals such as squirrels, rabbits, moles, do damage to the course and have to be culled and provision for this is undertaken by professional bodies.

Trees that affect the course, particularly when overhanging teeing grounds and preventing the growth of grass, or the safety of golfers by obscuring visibility for playing shots safely, may need to be lopped. On some occasions felling may be necessary. This work has to be implemented under the control of the Head Greenkeeper, who always has to recognise the need for tree preservation and to ensure that any tree preservation order is respected. Tree planting will take place where and when necessary, with professional advice sought when conditions require it.

15. Health & Safety

The General Manager is the Club's Health and Safety Officer and co-ordinates all Health and Safety

issues throughout the Club. Clays Golf Club maintains a Health and Safety policy, which shall be distributed to all members of the Greenkeeping staff, together with a comprehensive Risk Assessment policy. The Head Greenkeeper is responsible for maintaining and updating the Club's policies relating to greenkeeping issues, in consultation with the General Manager.

The Club's Health and Safety Consultant Advisor shall make at least one visit per year and produce a written report on any matters affecting Greens Health and Safety. This will be considered by the Course Manager and the Greens Committee and a suitable plan of action drawn up if deemed necessary. All accidents and/or incidents must be reported to officials as soon as possible, for recording into the Club's accident/incident book.

Players have a responsibility for the Health and Safety of themselves and others whilst on the course. Guidelines are constantly under review.

16. Course Planner

Clays Golf Club is committed in maintaining an accurate, quality course planner for sale in the Professional Shop and also measuring devices that are now permitted.

17. Web Site

Clays Golf Club is committed in providing comprehensive details of the course and other activities via the Club's website www.claysgolf.co.uk