

UPMINSTER GOLF CLUB COURSE POLICY

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1. PREFACE

The purpose of this policy document is to set out the long term aims & responsibilities for the management of the Upminster Golf Course.

These proposals have been approved by the Management Committee and are available to members for information in both 'hard copy', and on our website, for all to see. <http://www.upminstergolfclub.co.uk/>

The intention is to have a clear picture of exactly what our long term objective is and a broad outline of what we need to do to achieve that.

This will enable the *management committees* to work in a planned manner consistently towards the long term objective, even though there will be changes of management members. When approved in its final form, this policy document will be strictly adhered to and the management committee must sanction any future proposed changes.

A rolling action plan to continue delivery of the long term objective will be the focus for monthly course committee meetings throughout the year. They must take into account the club's priorities and available finances. Implementation of the rolling action plan, towards the long-term objective, will lead to recognition that Upminster Golf Course is one of the best- maintained and enjoyable courses in the county.

It is not, and has no pretensions to become, a championship course. It is to be maintained in excellent condition for the enjoyment of all members of all handicaps along with their guests. Visitors and societies are welcome provided they satisfy the Club's criteria of membership of a recognised Golf Club and playing ability up to minimum standard laid down by the committee.

2. THE COURSE

INTRODUCTION

The first 9 holes of the course at Upminster were designed by Harry Colt, a highly esteemed golf architect, in the early 1930's. He applied his design skills to the use of naturally presented features of slopes, valleys and, most importantly, the River Ingrebourne to provide an interesting and challenging course. The second 9 holes were added a short time later. During the early days there was only light use of any golf course, and the designer would be very surprised to observe the intensity of use on the courses of today. Trolley ways between greens and tees do not easily accommodate the wear put on them today and solutions to this problem have been sought and applied over the years with only limited success.

The course is formed mainly on clay substructure. This clay substructure is prone to becoming water logged in some areas and is adversely affected by heavy use, particularly golf trolleys using the same ground.

Compaction has occurred in many areas around the course, especially around greens and walkways to the next tee. The intention is to relieve compaction by intense aeration programmes and, to avoid the further compaction in the winter months, when the grass has stopped growing, by *restricting the use of trolleys*. Pathways will be created wherever practical and surfaced with the same grey gravel that we have used to build, for example, the path from the 12th tee. Over the years many changes/improvements have been introduced - the land on our current 4th and 5th holes has been purchased.

Some tees have been rebuilt: notably numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16 & 18 with drainage and number 17 with *partial* drainage

Some greens have been relocated and some rebuilt: 1, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13 & 15.

Greens 6, 8, 11, 13 & 16 have a 20/80 bents/fescue grass whilst all other greens have annual meadow grass. Following the successful introduction of the patented "Turf-dry" drainage system, the need to uplift & re-lay greens has been deemed unnecessary. Greens 1,3,4,7,9,10 & 11 have all been treated in this way.

An irrigation system was installed around 1970, in two phases; first to automatically water the greens then, the tees.

The main distribution system was replaced in May 2000 using MDPE pipe work and an additional pump. This system should give a reliable service for many years.

Many improvements have been made to our course over the years in line with a clear, agreed picture of our long term objective. The intention of this COURSE POLICY DOCUMENT is to ensure *continuity of purpose* as management committee's change.

The following sections provide a clear vision of our aims and how to achieve them.

2. THE COURSE

OUR MAIN OBJECTIVE is

“FOR UPMINSTER GOLF COURSE TO BE ONE OF THE MOST ADMIRED IN ESSEX”

This is a fine sentiment, but not measureable. In order to do this we should ensure that the golf club attracts & maintains membership numbers of around 900 along with consistent visitor & society numbers. Income levels should meet budget expectations.

We will achieve this by developing an attitude and culture of *continual improvement* in everything we do.

To achieve our objective(s) we will ensure that:

- All the greens have immaculate putting surfaces, all with identical turf; with closely mown surrounds and aprons. The course is *playable all year round* on permanent greens (except for abnormal conditions) built using 20/80 bents/fescue grass mixture.
- All the tees are built to the same standard and specification with proper drainage. All tees should be firm & level.
- The fairways are well “contoured” with clear definition of the semi-rough. There will be two clearly defined semi-rough areas. On some holes in areas that are “well out of play”, there will be uncut rough.
- The bunkers are consistent in design, all with the same specification of sand, the edges having been manicured, all raked at the beginning of every day.
- Paths are constructed to the same specification.
- Trees clearly define fairways. There will be a sense of openness, particularly when viewing the River Ingrebourne which must be regarded as a key feature of the course. Copses are always tidy. Dead trees and lumber are cleared every autumn. Annual tree planting will be carried out, with specific emphasis on selecting “indigenous” species.
- Ditches are clear of debris and the banks regularly cut. Aeration of all forms is an ongoing activity to improve the drainage of the course as well as the quality of the ‘sward’.
- All machinery is housed under cover and *secure* at the end of the working day. Machinery is maintained to the highest standard in order to maximise its useful life in line with budget expectations.

- The Course Manager is highly valued because of the manner in which he manages his staff, the way he interacts with the members and, most importantly, his professionalism in *maintaining the course* i.e. doing the right thing at the right time according to the weather conditions and competition schedule.

OBJECTIVES

2.1 FAIRWAYS

Fairways must be suitable for golf throughout the year.

Our course drainage system has, to date, proved most beneficial. An inspection & evaluation of fairway drainage will be undertaken on an annual basis to ensure its on-going effectiveness. It may become necessary to add further drains as may be deemed necessary

The specifications decided upon are for drains to be 7 metres apart. The same specification as that employed on the 9th fairway some years ago.

There are no “right or wrong” drainage separation distances, but obviously the closer together U drains the greater the cost.

A policy of aeration and, in particular, verti-draining will be implemented.

All the fairways will be “contoured” to increase their attractiveness.

The fairways will be cut to a height of 15mm (3/4”) during summer conditions.

There will be two levels of semi-rough and, in remote areas, there will be un-cut rough in which wild flower growth will be encouraged. There will be a strip of semi-rough (2.5-4.5 metre width) on each side of the fairway that will be cut to a height of 40 mm. Second level to be cut to height of 80 mm - summer conditions. There will be clear definition of the aprons and the surrounds of the greens.

2.2 GREENS

Greens will have immaculate putting surfaces with identical turf & playable all year round, (adverse conditions being the exception)

The greens, with professional “green keeping”, will have “immaculate” putting surfaces that meet the following criteria (in order of priority).

- 1) Smoothness of putting surface that allows the ball to run true without “snaking”, and remain in contact with the surface at all times.
- 2) Pace should be as fast as possible.
- 3) A firm but not hard green.

Whenever greens are re-built they will have a new irrigation pipeline with new sprinklers and two approach sprinklers. However, it must be noted that the patented "Turf-Dry" drainage system has proved a great success and has obviated the need to re-build greens in order to improve their condition.

2.3 TEES

All tees should be level, firm, maintained at a height of 12mm and consistent in standard.

Any rebuilt tees will be protected when necessary by having winter mats provided.

The green staff will adopt a regular programme of "divoting" the par 3's in particular, and other tees when needed.

The new wooden, post-type Tee markers, installed in 2009, provide an aesthetic benefit and will be the specification going forward.

2.4 BUNKERS

The bunkers should be of uniformly high standard and *similarity* of design.

The sand must be the same texture in all the bunkers. This may require replacing some sand from time to time and ensuring that all drainage from the bunkers is functioning correctly. Some bunkers have been constructed with a 'revetted' face and these will require specific maintenance to ensure a 'fair' lie at their base.

There will be a minimum of 3" of sand in all bunkers.

Bunkers will be raked *daily* by green staff and/or casual labour. (this objective may be relaxed during, for example, work on major projects). They will be examined regularly for water retention and the drains kept clear. They will be drained using appropriate materials and continually renovated (this will include the replacement of sand).

A rake will be provided for each bunker – two in the larger ones – and all players will be expected to repair their footmarks. The rake will be replaced in and not outside the bunker.

The bunkers will be carefully edged. Loose sand around the bunkers will be removed by brushing.

There will be no evidence of grass or weeds growing in the bunkers.

2.5 DITCHES AND DRAINAGE

In our continued effort to make the course playable all year round fairway drainage has been provided. Therefore the ditches will be kept deep, clean and free running.

2.6 TREES

The species of trees planted should be those that are “indigenous” to the Upminster area (an exception to this may be the ‘clubhouse side’ notably the 1st and 18th holes and the areas around the clubhouse - making this the “Augusta” of the course).

Upminster golf course has a wonderful abundance and infinite variety of tree specimens. Where there is evidence of the detrimental effects of climbers, most notably ivy, this will be cut at its base and allowed to wither thereby freeing the tree(s) from strangulation.

A *key responsibility* of any course committee is to ensure good husbandry of our tree stock along with the benefit of new plantings – it is to be noted that saplings and ‘whips’ are low cost and enjoy better long term success rates than planting *mature* specimens.

2.7 PATHS

The construction of paths is intended to provide a practical benefit in reducing wear on the course. Surfacing materials used will be ‘gravel-type’ and grey in colour. Paths will be neat and consistent with adequate drainage.

2.8 COURSE MAINTENANCE

The Course Manager is the person who has the knowledge, skill and experience to decide what how and when to “manage” the course. He will plan the timing of the treatment of greens tees and fairways (cutting height, fertilisation, top dressing, verti-draining and hollow-tining.) He will liaise with the Secretary, thereby taking into account fixtures & competitions.

2.9 TEMPORARY GREENS

It is the responsibility of the Course Manager or, in his absence, his deputy or the Secretary or, in his absence, the Chairman of Course, to decide on a day by day basis the need for temporary greens to be brought into use. Considerations are:

1. Is the normal green too soft to take foot traffic?
2. In frosty weather would footmarks damage the top surface?
3. If the normal green is being worked intensively, a temporary green may be brought into use in order that the work may proceed safely, more quickly and with greater productivity.
4. *Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) data sheets will be the guiding principle.*

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Management Committee is responsible for the management of Upminster Golf Club in all its aspects.

The Course Committee, having declared acceptance of the Course Policy, will devise plans for its implementation giving regard to emerging priorities and available budgetary funds. The Course Committee oversees the detailed management of the Golf Course including financial, personnel, machinery and general management of staff.

The Course Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy in all its aspects – planning of maintenance schedules in relation to fixture lists, liaising with the club secretary on any problem areas; machinery, maintenance planning, long term budgeting schedules, records of personnel training, education and discipline, allocation of daily tasks, compliance with the Clubs Health and Safety policy; fertilisers and chemicals storage along with safety and ecology.

The Course Manager reports to the Secretary, attends course committee meetings and advises that said committee.

The Secretary has established management controls that monitor the policies set by the Committees and ensures correct management practices are followed. Likely variations from the budget will be notified. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to co-ordinate the Upminster fixture list, giving consideration to work on the course. He will communicate all alterations and changes.

4. RESOURCES

The agreed staffing levels, for the maintenance of both the Golf Course and the Bowling Green, include the following:

Course Manager
Deputy Course Manager
1st Assistant
3 Green Keepers
TOTAL = 6

Additionally, we may take on a maximum of two *temporary staff* from April for a maximum of three months to help out during the peak growing period of the year. Additionally, there should be provision for a *trainee* green-keeper to be employed.

Allowance should also be made for a 'bunker raker' to be employed at weekends.

There will be a commitment to training and education of green staff who are all encouraged to obtain City and Guilds Certificates in Green-keeping to the maximum of their abilities. Staff will also be encouraged to become members of BIGGA and to attend discussion groups arranged by this organization.

The club will support them in their efforts to progress.

5. TIMING OF THE WORK TO BE DONE ON THE COURSE

Much essential work has to be completed before a certain time of the year. It will be the responsibility of the Course Manager, in regular discussions with the Secretary and Course Committee, to plan this work well in advance. The aim here is to ensure that, during those periods in which work has to be done, the golf programme is subject to as little disruption as possible. Major works which may significantly affect the playing of golf will be advertised well in advance.

6. CLOSING THE COURSE

The course may be closed on the authority of the Course Manager or his Deputy or, in his absence, the Secretary or, in his absence, the Chairman of Course when unusual weather conditions have occurred and damage to the course would result if play were permitted. Such conditions would exist if the greens were largely waterlogged, if the course were flooded or during frost or snow. Thick fog would also demand temporary closure until *safe conditions* prevailed.

During a competition the Secretary or an authorised member of the committee supervising the competition may, if he considers that the greens have become unsuitable for play, close the course. In winter months decisions to close the course are unlikely to be rescinded for the rest of the day. Temporary Greens will be used when there is a frost and when the main greens are saturated or being worked on. In summer a decision to close the course may be rescinded one hour after the conditions which closed it have ceased and after inspection by the person responsible.

7. GREEN STAFF AND MEMBERS

7.1 WORK on the COURSE

The green staff will be vigilant so as not to delay play unreasonably. However, work has always to be productive and especially at the beginning of the day.

All players are therefore asked to give full consideration to green staff by not stopping their work unreasonably.

A code of practice has been established to cover the subject.

Members must be aware that the safety of our green staff is of paramount importance.

7.2 COMPLAINTS

Any complaints must be made to the Secretary who will investigate the matter together with the Course Manager. If they cannot deal with the complaint themselves, the matter will be submitted to the Course Committee/Management Committee.

8. MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT

The Course Manager will produce a rolling 5 year plan of machinery replacements, additions, repairs and renewals for consideration, amendments and final approval by the Course Committee and the Management Committee for incorporation into the Club's financial plan.

The Course Manager 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 Committee.

He is also responsible for the maintenance of all machinery in all its aspects – records of use, preventative maintenance, major servicing, adjustments etc. He will recognize the heavy investment made in machinery and will make every effort to preserve that investment.

9. IRRIGATION

The overall policy is to use as little water as possible to encourage deeper rooting grasses to predominate. However, in almost every season there are times when waterfall 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 our course.

THE SYSTEM

An automated watering system was installed in the early 70's to provide water to greens and tees only. Water is supplied into two 10,000 gallon tanks and that water is then pumped at 10 bar pressure into the system controlled by a computer (Tonic Rainmaker R.M.I.). The Water supply can be supplemented from May to September 30th with water from the Ingrebourne up to 50,000 gallons per year.

Our policy on irrigation is to have the potential to provide water to all greens and tees as well as to the approaches to greens.

Fairway sprinkling has not, to date, been deemed necessary at Upminster GC. Any proposals on this subject would need to take strict account of the likely effect on the environment and the potentially high cost.

10. ECOLOGY

This objective is to develop and maintain structural diversity within the habitat including density, variation in height, age and species. It is important to create the appropriate balance between the varying habitats within the landscape, i.e. wildlife, woodlands, grasslands & water features.

The Upminster golf course has some natural woodland within the perimeter of the course; it is an important part of the policy to preserve the natural habitat of fauna and flora on the course. Trees, which affect the course, particularly when overhanging teeing grounds and preventing the growth of grass, have to be lopped. On some occasions felling may be necessary on the strict proviso that prior permission of the golf club, or in some cases the freeholder, is sought. This work has to be implemented under the control of the Course Manager, who must accept the need for tree preservation and to ensure that any tree 'preservation order' is respected.

11. PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Whilst we must recognize the confidence we place in the Committee, along with the competence and technical knowledge of the Course Manager, it is the policy of Upminster Golf Club to seek opinions, and audit from, the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) at Bingley when considered necessary, as recommended by the R&A. The Course Manager is also authorised to seek assistance from the STRI for soil analysis or for any questions he may have concerning any abnormal happenings such as invasion of unusual fungi or pests. No major alterations to the architecture of the course will be undertaken without the full consultation of a qualified golf architect and subsequent approved of the Management Committee.