

Sustainable Golf Course Management Project



SCOTTISH GOLF UNION



SCOTTISH LADIES' GOLFING ASSOCIATION



WORKING FOR GOLF



Glencorse Golf Club

Sustainably presenting firm, free draining playing surfaces across an inland golf course



Glencorse Golf Club is an 18-hole mature parkland golf course situated in Milton Bridge, Penicuik, Midlothian. Founded in 1890, the course was designed by Willie Park. The golf course, at 5,217 yards, offers many picturesque views, is aesthetically pleasing and enjoyable to play, yet suitably challenging for golfers of all abilities.

The Challenge

On his appointment in 1994, the Course Manager Ian Bell inherited a golf course with traditional soil/clay – based greens predominantly populated by annual meadow-grass and with significant levels of thatch within the upper soil profiles on the majority of greens. This led to frequent outbreaks of disease, particularly fusarium patch, requiring fungicide treatment and the main greens were often closed for play during periods of wet weather. High concentrations of thatch were also evident on many green approaches and fairways.



The Solutions

The focus from the mid 1990's, implementing traditional and sustainable greenkeeping practices, has essentially been three fold:

- Thatch removal programme initially targeting the greens moving to also addressing approaches and affected fairways.
- Vastly increased programme of aeration and top dressing to greens, approaches and fairways.
- Adopting a continuing principle of enhancing the species composition on the greens encouraging establishment of finer grasses, i.e. a higher proportion of bent, and more recently fescue grasses, within the sward at Glencorse GC.

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The Outcomes

Golfing Benefits

- Extension of the playing season on the full course well into the Winter months.
- Improved golfing experience for both members and visitors alike due to firmer drier playing surfaces, dominated by the finer grasses on greens, approaches and fairways.

Economic Benefits

- Golf course drains quicker hence reduced course closures directly due to wet weather.
- Less incidence of disease resulting in significant cost savings in the fungicide budget.

Environmental Benefits

- Drier, firmer, free draining putting surfaces, green approaches and fairways throughout the golf course.
- Minimal water input required – merely sufficient to keep the grasses alive.
- Enhanced proportions of bent grass, and more recently fescue, within the sward – encouraging the re-establishment of the indigenous grasses.
- Cultural management practices employed to mitigate against any future disease outbreaks requiring minimal or no fungicide input.

Success Criteria

- Full commitment and backing of the Greens Committee and the full Golf Club Committee to embark on a programme of sustainable golf course management.
- Resources available within course management budget to ensure suitably qualified manpower in position and machinery requirements also made available for the greenkeeping staff.
- Regular communications with the membership keeping them informed of progress throughout the intensive aeration/top dressing periods, particularly where disruption to play.
- Golf course does not shut as often as previously during periods of wet weather – with any course closures now short-lived until water drains from the playing areas.

What Next?

- Continue working to the agreed course management plan without complacency, aerating and top dressing to keep the thatch build up at bay and to create a more sustainably managed golf course.
- Continue to restrict the use of watering and fertiliser input to a minimum, saving time for the greenstaff and associated budget costs.
- Continue overseeding programme to establish increased proportions of finer grasses – bent/fescue to the sward across the golf course.
- Address shading issues on some greens through the club's Woodland Management Plan.
- By continuing the sustainable management practices now well established, Glencorse GC will be well positioned to withstand the increasing challenges and impact of climatic change, particularly wet weather.
- Founded in 1890, Glencorse has been managed for over a century offering an enjoyable yet challenging course layout, particularly on the Par-3's, which will continue to be managed in accordance with the history, heritage and traditions of Glencorse GC.