



Peebles GC: Hedge planting

INTRODUCTION: Set amid the beautiful rolling hills of the Borders overlooking the town of popular Peebles, this 6,138-yard Harry Colt designed golf course presents an enjoyable challenge for golfers of all abilities, affording great views from every hole and excellent greens in great conditions.

THE ISSUE

In 2003, Peebles Golf Club with support from the Scottish Golf Environment Group (SGEG) wanted to improve the appearance and biodiversity of their golf course. Almost 1km of fenced and otherwise featureless boundaries on the southern and western edges of the course, seemed an ideal opportunity for new hedging.

Many golf courses that derived from farmed landscapes inherit hedges or their remnants. Whilst existing boundary hedges often remain more or less intact, the nature of golf course layout and play has often meant that hedges within golf courses have become fragmented or removed altogether. Through appropriate management, intact and remnant hedges will continue to contribute to the biodiversity of the golf course. Scope for new hedge creation on golf courses will be largely restricted to boundaries, typically those which were previously fenced or open. This was the case at Peebles but of such a length and sighting that could make a huge contribution to the enrichment of the local habitat network and biodiversity.

THE SOLUTION

A design was drawn up for two sections of mixed native hedge with hedgerow trees. The first ran westerly from the clubhouse to the trees behind the 2nd green incorporating a number of existing individual and groups of semi-mature lime and sycamore trees along the way. The second section ran north westerly along the entire left hand side of the 4th hole.

Here the design included the widening of the hedge at two points to form small copses of several dozen trees and shrubs to give additional habitat and landscape value and help shape the hole.

This section created a new wildlife corridor between the adjacent farmland and the golf course whilst also creating further linkage between the neighbouring woodlands at either end of the 4th hole. New fences were erected inside the existing fence lines to create 2m wide corridors into which the hedges were planted and which were made entirely rabbit-proof with netting. The hedge was planted in a double staggered row at 6 plants per metre using bare root whips.

AT A GLANCE...

>> In 2003, Peebles GC improved the landscape and biodiversity value of their golf course by planting 2 sections of mixed native hedge with hedgerow trees.

>>A mixture of native species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and dogrose, with trees such as oak, ash rowan and holly, with funding from Scottish Natural Heritage.

>>The hedge is now well established giving added landscape character to the course along with increased biodiversity.



Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) grant funding of £1500 was obtained for this project with the assistance of SGEG.

Native Hedge species planted: hawthorn, blackthorn, dogrose, holly, hazel, elder, guelder rose. Native Hedgerow trees: oak, ash, lime (every 2metres). Copse species: oak, ash, rowan, silver birch, hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, elder, gean, guelder rose.

Weed competition was suppressed with annual applications of glyphosate for three years with occasional hand clearance of broadleaf weeds such as thistles. All the preparation, planting and maintenance work was carried out by the club's greenstaff. This took approximately five staff one full week, including weed killing, fence erection and planting.

OUTCOMES

Due to the quality of the stock, the planting technique, the fertile soil conditions and the maintenance operations, the hedge established extremely well with good growth from the outset. Only in sections under mature trees were the plants held back due to shade and possibly competition for moisture. However, some holly plants were leaning and inspection of the severed stump end, main stem and branches revealed small teeth marks and bark removal, some severe enough to kill the plants.

The weed control had been very effective, but the dead vegetation had been left in situ, creating a continuous mat over the ground with small holes across the surface of this mat, often near the damaged holly plants. The conclusion was that whilst keeping the rabbits out with netting, the new hedgerow was perfect habitat for hungry voles, providing continuous cover for them at ground level, and a thorny canopy as perfect protection from owls and kestrels.

The only answer was to avoid the dead weeds matting and protect the remaining holly with spiral or vole guards.

Despite this glitch, both hedges have gone from strength to strength. In this single very successful project, Peebles Golf Club has achieved stronger boundary definition, landscape enhancement, public amenity, habitat creation, habitat linkage and increased biodiversity. The ground layer is a maze of wildlife passages and lying areas. Now the hedge is beyond the need for weed control, wildflowers are beginning to move in too, including yarrow, lesser stitchwort and ribwort plantain.



New hedge in 2003



Hedge in 2007



Hedge in 2010

FIND OUT MORE

If your club would like to promote its business success story or require support in this area, please contact your Club Development Officer or Environment Manager Carolyn Hedley c.hedley@scottishgolf.org

This case study was produced with

support from

