

SPORTS COUNCIL CHAIRMAN CALLS ON PLANNING AUTHORITIES TO AID GOLF BOOM

DR ROGER BANNISTER, chairman of the Sports Council, has urged the Government and local authorities not to hold up the boom in golf by a tough attitude on planning consent for new courses.

He admitted that the Sports Council's target of 500 new courses in England and Wales by 1981 would be hard to achieve unless there was more co-operation from planning authorities.

Speaking at the Professional Golfers' Association convention in London, Dr Bannister said the present rate of new golf course building, about 25 a year, was not enough to give golf its first major expansion of facilities since the 1930s. Plans for more courses had been trapped in the 'rough' of land shortages, high land costs and the bunkers of planning consent.

He said: 'I think our target can only be realised if local authorities and Government change their attitude and allow land for golf courses to be made available in green belts, which is quite possible without loss of its amenity value.'

'Not only golf, but several other sports can be imaginatively inter-laced to the great satisfaction of all. Walkers, riders, fishermen and golfers can co-exist without fear of a whizzing golf ball.'

He added: 'We understand the difficulties faced by local authorities when they are being pressed to provide land for a new golf course close to a crowded town. Competition for such land is considerable.'

'But we believe local authorities should play their full part in providing the land for a game which a wide cross section of the British public clearly want and enjoy.'

'We think our target is a realistic one which deserves to be met. Britain taught the rest of the world to play golf, and it seems only fair in this Sport for All year that we should not deny our own people the chance to play it themselves.'

Dr Bannister also called for:

More municipal courses The present ratio in England and Wales is 92 private courses to 8 municipal courses. He said: 'A better balance would be a ratio of 70 to 30 and then the scandalous early dawn queues at municipal golf courses would be cut.'

Smaller, less sophisticated and cheaper courses, including more 9-hole courses. He mentioned the Sandown Park golf centre, built on about 60 acres instead of the usual 100, as a good example.

Use of derelict land for golf courses. There are 50,000 acres in Britain, much of it formerly used by the Coal Board and the Defence Ministry.

More multi-purpose use of golf courses Clubhouse facilities for other sports, like squash, and careful landscaping of courses to allow picnic spots and bridle paths.

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The 7 h.p. engine, with three forward speeds and one reverse has plenty of reserve power for heavy mowing and the 2-pedal control enables changing gear on the move.

The mower cuts a 28in. swath and the 30in. turning radius permits a tight turn and trim within ½ in. of borders. Extra large diameter wheels give good traction.