

Planning to achieve course objectives

Planning involves the development by the head greenkeeper of a realistic work programme that will ensure the successful accomplishment of management objectives for the course. Proper planning of maintenance and construction activities reduces the number of unexpected emergency problems. On any course, there is always something more that needs to be done or improvements made. One of the advantages of long-range planning is that you put down on paper the areas that require attention, regardless of magnitude, so they can eventually be included in a priority list. It has to be recognised that a perfect course does not exist and not all improvements can be accomplished. Time and money will be key factors in determining what can be done. After deciding to develop a comprehensive plan, there are some definite steps I would suggest.

By J.S. Philp, Assistant Links
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You Must Become Totally Familiar With The Course Itself

This involves an initial assessment of the course, which is best done by touring the course alone noting down everything that does not look right and drawing small sketches of the area. You may want to formulate solutions to the problem at this time or think over corrective measures.

Begin A Thorough Examination Of All Available Records Again Making Notes On Every Aspect

Even if you are totally familiar with the situation, a new listing of major maintenance procedures will help freshen them in your memory or cause you to conclude there are better ways to accomplish your goals.

Seek Local Knowledge

Talk to as many people as possible, including staff or others who are knowledgeable about the course's maintenance history. With their firsthand experience, your staff may be able to make a valuable contribution and their inclusion can generate pride in being a part of the planning process. This will bring out any areas you have overlooked or are not immediately apparent.

Take Your Information To Your Immediate Superior

Arrange a tour of the course with the greens convener. Point out what you have concluded and suggest the steps you feel are required. Do not overlook the advantage of having a second opinion. He may have seen something you did not. Remember, you are trying to sell your concept of a long-range plan, so encourage your convener's participation. His input may be valuable as he may have in mind improvements or alterations that have been discussed for some time, but never made an official part of course development policy.

With All The Relevant Information It's Time To Go To The Drawing Board

You can now begin to apply solutions to each hole individually in a graphic way. Devise a key to keep all operations consistently marked.

Staffing Levels

The actual work will be done by the greens staff, except for major developments, so it is important to

make superiors fully aware of the necessity to maintain adequate levels of staffing. Work-force considerations are essential before making project recommendations.

Costs

Material cost estimates for particular projects will have to be evaluated. This may be done in conjunction with the secretary and/or greens convener, if necessary, contacting suppliers and so forth.

Establishing Priorities

You probably will not be the individual who finally determines the priorities, although you should have some major input into the final decision making process. It is virtually impossible to provide you with exact guidelines for establishing priorities, but some of the general areas to consider include the safety of golfers and workers. If there are areas that may cause an accident, they should be dealt with first. Playability of the course is also important—that's our reason for existence. We must provide a highly playable course, or we may not have enough golfers to pay for overheads. The course is your club's biggest asset and needs to be

well-maintained, enjoyable to play and of interesting character to attract and bring back the customers. Costs, in terms of pounds and time, must also receive strong consideration in the priority establishment scheme. There will be projects that take a great deal of time but few pounds and vice versa. Finally, the time of year that a certain project can best be accomplished is another factor. For example, some landscaping requires autumn planting, while other areas will require planting in the spring. The majority of projects are undertaken 'out of season'—that is, from October to March. A short-range, or winter programme, can be drawn up, involving a number of priorities from the long-range plan, but as the weather is obviously a critical factor during this period, it is difficult to forecast project completion dates.

Plan Term

Four or five years is about the longest period for which you would want to prepare a plan, but keep in mind that every year you should add another year and, so, always be five years ahead. If you try to extend the plan beyond five years, the turnover of committee members would be too great and, in any case, it is difficult to envisage a plan beyond five years. In addition to establishing priorities, the material you have gathered has other uses.

Golfer Public Relations

Whenever a golfer complains about a problem area on the course, you can refer to the plan and say you are aware of the problem and that it is planned for correction in the long-range plan. If you do not have a planned solution, the golfer could tell other members that you did not know a problem existed. Also, photocopy the plans for a particular hole or area when you are about ready to work on it and post them on the club noticeboard. This tells the golfer you are going to remedy a situation that has been causing problems and he won't be surprised to see men and equipment or excavations in the area. In all likelihood, he will be pleased to see you are spending his money to improve the course and will more readily accept interruptions to his game.

Staff Relations And Instructions

Another advantage of these plans is the ease with which you can give directions to staff. Referring to the plan, they can see and you can outline

the exact location on a particular hole and the equipment and materials needed.

Budgeting And Management Approvals

With a plan, you can better prepare your budget and present it with more information at hand. Also the budget-approving authority would not be surprised by your proposals.

New Approaches To Old Problems

Some situations or problems remain the same, while others will multiply or compound themselves with time, such as a severe drainage problem. Of course, the longer you put off correcting a problem, the longer you and the golfers will have to live with it but, with an improvement plan, you can start with the existing problems and then only have to solve new ones as they arise. With inflation, a project will rapidly escalate in cost and on a golf course that could mean a lot of money wasted because of delay alone. When you are totally aware of the needs of the course, you can begin to explore new options for their solution. You can get to the root of the problem and solve the underlying cause, not just deal with the symptoms as is so often the case. After a problem

area has been hopefully remedied, the situation will require regular monitoring to ensure the solution has, in fact, solved the problem. If this is not the case, a revaluation is necessary.

Future Plans

From the onset, you should recognise that new problems will develop on the course and that there will be causes for altering priorities. But with your plan and other records, you can examine these new problems and determine the best solution without any great difficulty. No-one can predict precisely what the future will hold, but with a comprehensive long-range plan, you will at least be aware of the major factors you have to contend with. If something more arises, you will be in a better position to adapt your plan and continue with improvements because of the planning to which you have committed yourself.

Plan Drawings

A general plan of the course layout should be kept. The dimensions of the maintained areas—such as the greens, tees, fairways and rough, as well as the total area, should be recorded.

This information will be useful when ordering materials. Other items that should be kept on or with site plans are details of the drainage system, irrigation system and pump-house, a tree and shrub landscape plan, maintenance facility and service roads information and aerial photographs and surveys. It is advisable to have larger scale drawings of individual putting greens showing drainage and irrigation systems. Any new installations or uncovered existing ones should be recorded as necessary. The formulation of planned work programmes in obtaining objectives can be an important part of the head greenkeeper's managerial equipment. With an approved long-range plan, you are in the driver's seat. Its existence will enable you to proceed on a course of action without constant changes in policy brought about by new committee members. You can refer to an operational plan, which you were instrumental in compiling and that is being implemented to improve the course.

Therefore, your professional approach will gain you respect with your employer, not to mention benefits for yourself in the management of your course.

News & Views Continued...



failing to operate. I wondered if Trinity Hall resented the intrusion, but, by the second day, the gremlins had accepted *Golf Course '84* and the portraits gracing the dining hall gazed down upon all assembled at meal times with a seeming nod of approval.

Language represented a minor barrier at Cambridge as Americans, Canadians, Swedes, Dutch, English, Irish, Scots and Welsh all found much in common.

It was felt that the genial Scots were the hardest to understand—a problem encountered by our American friends when we visited them in force at Anaheim in 1981!

As the irrigation classes progressed through Thursday afternoon, the audience increasingly grew thirstier and looked forward to the 'get acquainted' cocktail party in the evening. Traditionally, this is when new friends are greeted, relationships are cemented and the harmony of the conference set.

Having sat well into the early hours with Jas Prusa and Bruce Williams of the GCSAA and Rolf—agronomist to the Swedish Golf Union—I know that I am in need of some education in the art of The Scotch Swallow—a condition that has been known to down even the hardiest the morning after...

Full details of *Golf Course '84* have already appeared in *Greenkeeper*. Suffice it to say that four glorious days at Cambridge ended, as the punts rolled along waterways past the college windows, with EIGGA president Jack McMillan expressing the need for an improved

educational link between the countries represented at conferences, such as the very successful, enterprising and immensely enjoyable *Golf Course '84*.

*Jimmy Kidd, Golf Course Manager,
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• Associations and organisations represented at *Golf Course '84* were the British Association Of Golf Course Architects, British Turf Irrigation Association, British Association Of Golf Course Constructors, Scottish And International Golf Greenkeepers' Association, PGA European Tour, Golf Course Superintendents' Association Of America and the English And International Golf Greenkeepers' Association.



Jimmy Kidd gets to grips with his slide-show presentation.