The golf course manager often complains about the aspects of construction or design on his course which cause maintenance problems. In the past I have tended to blame the contractor, but while working for Brian Pierson Contractors I have formed a very different opinion. I think the majority of mistakes in the construction of a golf course come about as a direct result of lack of communication between all parties concerned.

It is still the case however, for whatever reasons, that agreed specifications are not always met and the quality of the end product—the golf course—suffers in consequence. Such problems often do not become apparent until after the new owners have ‘taken delivery’ of the course and the ‘baby’ is placed in the hands of their ‘nanny’, more commonly known as the course manager. It is he who is left to bring the course into maturity, one of the most mis-used phrases relating to golf courses up and down the country, incredibly often applied to courses more than five years old!

In reality, reconstruction using correct materials and relevant specifications is more often than not the only way forward to realise expectations for what then becomes a very expensive ‘baby’ indeed.

Let’s look at a typical development. If a company or individual wants to build a golf course they contact an architect and a golf course contractor. The architect draws the plans and may also arrange for all specifications, as well as appointing a contractor. Alternatively an independent body may be consulted for the critical aspect of project specifications. The appointed contractor commences construction of the course, working from the architect’s plans and following the relative material specifications. A course manager has in many cases not been considered at this stage, leave alone appointed. Some architects unfortunately fail to realise a course design, (any course design), has to result in a layout which is playable and affords enjoyment and satisfaction to the average golfer—not just the tiger—as well as being maintainable cost effectively, especially in view of the current economic climate. Granted, the construction people build the course, but all the decisions are made by the owner and/or architect.

Where does the modern course manager fit into the overall scenario in the development of a new course? Many people in the golf industry still perceive the head greenkeeper or course manager as the man who tends the course or ‘he who cuts the greens’. Clearly they fail to recognise the wide-ranging skills, capabilities and responsibilities required of today’s course manager. I consider the end product in any new course project would undoubtedly benefit from the course manager’s input from the very earliest stages through to completion.

Arne van Amerongen says head greenkeepers and course managers should be appointed during the early stages of a golf course project as they’re the ones who have to correct them!

'I consider the end product in any new course project would undoubtedly benefit from the course manager's input from the very earliest stages through to completion.'