Erosion issue questioned

I am surely not alone in questioning the dogmatic forecasts of impending doom on our links courses as expressed at the St Andrews' Conference 'On course for Change.' Let alone statements which are debatable, such as that sea levels around our coasts have risen 15-20 cm in the past twenty years i.e. less than one centimetre per year. I am sure that someone will tell us how such minute rises are measured - on the same lines as greenkeepers stating that they set the mower 3½ inches in terms of fractions of a millimetres! Even in these computerised days, how can they measure such microscopic differences?

One thing is certain - that such pessimistic forecasts that climate changes will destroy our famous links are made by 'experts' on weather who know nothing about golf and less about coastal protection. I deny that there are changes in weather patterns but there always have been for centuries. Prophets of doom and gloom all throughout the ages have virtually always been confounded by events. At regular intervals over the past 200 years we have been told that there will be mass starvation as this earth of ours cannot produce enough food to feed exploding populations. Yet, today, the problems are all to do with distribution and very little to do with production. Whatever happened to the millennium bug?

The most sensible comment on weather changes was made to me by a senior officer at the Met office who said that we were dealing with imponderables and that rash forecasts of disaster based on straight line graphs of a millimetre!! Even in these computerised days, how can they measure such microscopic differences, let alone statements which are debatable.

Nearly all the evidence produced by these experts is capable of different interpretations is nothing new and will be contradicted by events. Almost always, unforeseen interrelated balancing influences reduce extreme effects.

Congratulations are due to those practical men who observe the effects of wind and tide and devise schemes which trap blowing sand or stop it being washed away and which work despite the scarcely concealed derision of the boffins. Admittedly, such schemes have to be planned on a broad scale and need regular attention but they work. The biggest worry is the sheer cost, though chestnut paving is far better than gabions in many cases and vastly cheaper. Here's a toast to such eminently practical stalwarts as George Brown at Turnberry and Cyril Sutherland at Brancaster whose effective measures have harnessed those very elements which threaten their courses. I have always valued the ideas of practical men and experts should do the same instead of dismissing them as amateurs. They should remember the first precept of problem solving namely correct observation, followed by correct deduction.

Many are good at the first but hopeless at the second. Of course we must note what is going on but the doom and gloom brigade need to accept that nature is a very tough and resilient animal and can be constructive as well as destructive. I speak from a lifetime of working as a team with old bird and can be constructive.

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