Hosepipe Ban for Millions

BIGGA along with the Golf Club Managers Association is supporting England Golf in its strong attempts to put forward a coherent case for golf clubs to be considered for exemptions. Paul Keeling, England Golf Club Services Manager, explains their position...

Temporary Bans are not a new thing. Back in 2006 (the last time bans and drought orders were in effect) England Golf ran water management workshops in the Midlands and South, at which experts such as Dr Jerry Knox from Cranfield University and the Environment Agency, all presented historical data that this has happened every five or six years, even before golf as we know it was considered. At the workshops, advice on measures clubs should take to protect themselves for the future were disseminated.

But here we are in 2012, so what are England Golf doing?

In anticipation of temporary bans, England Golf has made representa- tion to the seven water companies with bans in place, advising of the restrictions will have to golf club BUSINESSES, highlighting that an inability to maintain the biggest business asset (the greens) to a usable standard could result in repair and replacement costs of tens of thousands of pounds along- side a significant loss of income for clubs. This will naturally have a knock-on effect to secondary spend within clubhouses and professions’ shops, ancillary supplier businesses could also be severely affected and employment will be jeopardised.

At the date of writing this article with one water company, Veolia, has provided a response.

What does England Golf suggest?

We would encourage each club affected by the ban to make individual representation to their water company, and in back up our representation, we should congratulate Patrick Dawson, General Manager at Burghley Beeches Golf Club, who has also asked the question of the Thames Water Public Consultation Department and received the following reply, an irrigation system is not classified as a hosepipe!

Plus nothing supporting information to strengthen your case;

Visitor Income - calculate the income to the Club and the impact it would have on the business if this dropped off due to poor greens conditions.

Justification of Water Use - It is important to show that current water use is efficient (irrigation replacement and necessary to maintain the playing surfaces and that water is not being wasted through carrying out the following:

Irrigation System Audit - efficiency and adequacy of your system, water storage measurement.

Reductions made to Current Demands - Records on reductions made to irrigation inputs e.g. watering greens only.

Agronomic Advice - Specialist advice to help strengthen your case in proving what water use is essential to keeping your turf alive and showing the Club are taking all possible measures to take to reduce drought susceptibility. Also, budget costs associated with remedial work in the event of loss of grass cover.

England Golf working with the Associations, BIGGA, GCMA, PGA etc, will continue to represent golf and support our affiliate clubs in securing access to the ever more valuable resource - WATER.

The water restrictions imposed throughout much of the south of England in April have caused much confusion amongst greenkeepers in the affected areas.

Whilst water shortages were not unexpected, some of the sudden and varying messages from water companies were. The news that some golf courses are now categorised as ‘gardens’ and subject to the same restrictions was a prime example.

This article hopes to highlight the varying experiences of course managers in dealing with increasingly adverse weather conditions as well as quickly regulations from authorities.

Ian Streeter, Course Manager at West Sussex Golf Club, has a limited amount of water in a borehole. He said readings taken from this borehole indicated the aquifers that they pump from was at the same level as last year and therefore had not recharged through winter. Ian then is in the position of having to make an exemption from the ban. One example was a club that did not want to be named, in the Thames Water region, and was given an exemption up until June.

The course manager from this club said: “My problem is, is that the exemption we’ve got currently is right and in place, but if they sud- denly come to us and say ‘no it’s not’ then things become difficult. I think it’s a very grey area at the moment.”

As the exemption is only up to June, the course manager was thinking about how to water their greens after this time.

“At the moment we’ve started to collect rainfall, but I would require a minimum of 20 cubic metres per day through the hot weather just to keep the greens alive. After that they would deteriorate and prob- ably quite rapidly,” he continued.

Alan Pierce MG, Course Manage- er at Ham Manor GC, in West Sussex, is in Southern Water’s region. Alan has an abstraction licence from the Environment Agency for 1.6 million gallons per year, for what they determine as the growing season from April until September.

The licence allows the Black Ditch which runs all the way through Sussex to the River Arun and then out to sea. This ditch runs through the course and is water table controlled, so is always at the water table level. As this is Alan’s only source of water, he is com- pletely at the mercy of nature when it comes to watering his course.