Irrigation

The unseasonably hot and dry spring weather has taken golf clubs across the UK by surprise in recent weeks, putting many an ageing and/or failing irrigation system to the test as a result.

If you’re one of the clubs that have limped through the last couple of summers with an inadequate system, it’s time to stop burying your head in the sand-bunker: either invest in a proper retrofit and remedial work, or budget for an all-new system.

Both are daunting steps in these economically difficult times, but are far better than having your existing system kick the bucket in the height of summer!

Let’s look at your options…

Retrofit and remedial work

Did you know that remedial work can improve an existing system’s efficiency by around 20%? By repairing or renovating, customers can make significant savings on ongoing operating costs as well as save on the expense of a new installation – something that makes perfect financial sense in these tough times.

If the wholesale replacement of your existing system just isn’t feasible, then it is possible to phase in a new system over time – though you will, of course, be limited by the pipe network you’ve already got.

For example: you could replace your mains and cabling in the first year; replace your pump system and tank the second year; and then, depending on your budget, put in a greens, tees and fairways system in the third year.

By carrying out the first two phases, you are free to ‘bolt-on’ greens, tees and fairways cover as and when you can, which offers a more cost-effective solution.

Sprinkler nozzles are also subject to wear, so something as simple as adequate maintenance and periodic replacement can bring about a dramatic improvement in the overall efficiency of your system.

Because they need to be replaced every few years, manufacturers are constantly updating and improving their design and function, which means new nozzles will work at the very best flow and pressure whereas older nozzles will always become less uniform with age.

Remarkably, simply by renewing sprinkler nozzles, you can increase the efficiency of your system by up to 10% at the right pressure and flow.

With nozzles costing on average just £15 per head, this can be a highly cost-effective way of improving your system and is a job that can be carried out by the greenkeeping team.

Time to keep a weather eye on your irrigation

This spring’s unseasonably warm weather looks set to be a sign of things to come. So – asks Robert Jackson – can your golf course irrigation system take the heat or is it time to upgrade?
Invest in an all-new system

Effective irrigation is crucial to successful course maintenance, and hence the majority of clubs have a contingency for this or are saving for a new system.

But many clubs persevere with serious problems, calling out the service engineers time and again, accruing unnecessary labour costs as well as causing turf damage during hot, dry spells, until it becomes a real headache.

Before you reach breaking point, it is prudent to weigh up the costs of calling out the engineers and growing annual service bills against budgeting for a new system.

More often than not, budgeting for new costs less in the long-term compared to throwing good money away. Proper long-term planning is, therefore, vital. A good system will last between 30 and 50 years if properly maintained and serviced, and should be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of your club.

Act now

Course Managers are beginning to see a trend in weather patterns, and I think it’s safe to say that this early hot, dry spell is a sign of things to come this summer. Perhaps it’s even given you a sneak preview of the kinds of problems you might face in the height of summer.

So if your irrigation system will struggle when things really hot up, act now to keep your course looking good and in perfect playing condition.
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Before you reach breaking point, it is prudent to weigh up the costs of calling out the engineers and growing annual service bills against budgeting for a new system.

More often than not, budgeting for new costs less in the long-term compared to throwing good money away in the short-term.

If a new system is called for, you will face the unpleasant thought that your irrigation system will struggle when things really hot up, act now to keep your course looking good and in perfect playing condition.

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Upgrading your irrigation system without splashing out.

GTI Gemini-Trident, made by Bailoy delivers the simplest-to-use, most reliable and inexpensive irrigation control system on the market. GTI squeezes maximum performance from every drop of water, giving you improved downtime, lower water consumption and greater operational economies.

Well proven over the last 30 years in the UK, it can be retro-fitted to your existing irrigation system to bring maximum value and unbeatable performance to your course.

Versatile and affordable, the GTI Gemini-Trident irrigation system is equally adaptable for use on football pitches, tennis courts and all kinds of sporting arenas and large gardens.

Contact Lely for details or visit bailoy.com
Dreams *can* come true

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at The Robert Trent Jones GC under David’s careful guidance, as I and approximately 10 other carefully selected Ohio State Program interns will be involved in the preparation of Congressional CC for the US Open.

After doing some research I found out that Congressional Country Club has been host to two US Opens, previously in 1964 and 1997, and one PGA championship in 1976.

Congressional is situated in Bethesda, Maryland just outside Washington DC. It is a 36-hole facility with a Gold course and a Blue course.

This year’s US Open will be held over the Blue course which was originally designed by Devereux Emmet and has been renovated over the years by many architects including Robert Trent Jones.

The experience of being part of the tournament preparation for a Major Championship hasn’t really sunk in. After gathering information about Congressional and reading how much work has been and will be put in from now until the championship begins gives me a taste of what I am in for. Congressional, although host to a PGA tour event every year, has really been pulling out all the stops to be prepared for a US Open, and to show the world what a fantastic venue it really is.

They are planning to have approximately 85 volunteers on hand from some of the best golf courses around the country and the world. Some coming from as far afield as Greece and Australia. They will have 60 full time staff, many of whom are seasoned veterans of previous Tour events. And more than 10 Ohio State interns, past and present will be helping, which is a huge number. It shows me what a great learning environment Congressional want to foster, by making this a truly global learning environment.

On top of that, they have requested the following list of equipment to be on hand:

6) Flex 21 greens mowers; (8) GR 1000 walk mowers; (3) GR 3150 Triplex mowers; (19) RM 5410 5 Gang Fairway mowers; (1) GM 4500 Rough Rotary units; (2) GM 3500 Rough Rotary units; (2) 5410 5 Gang Fairway mowers; (3) GR 3150 Triplex mowers; (1) RM 3100 Sidewinder; (2) SP 5040 Mechanical bunker rake; (12) Electric Workman utility vehicles; (10) Gas Workman utility vehicles; (4) Dump bed for 3200 Workman; (4) Transpro 80 trailers and (4) Transpro 100 trailers.

The preparations for each of the courses around the country and the world have been really impressive. The Fairways and Greens have been prepared and cut to perfection. The greens are kept at lightning speeds and are very undulating with a trend to slope from back to front.

Previously Congressional’s greens were 70% Poa and 30% Bentgrass but they have recently been reconstructed and they are now 100% Bentgrass, as are Robert Trent Jones’ greens.

In 2009, after the AT&T, the course was closed and the greens rebuild commenced. They were completely rebuilt from a Poa/Bent combination to the Creeping Bentgrass variety which was a combination of A1/A4.

The collars were seeded with Penncross and all existing drainage and greens profile was removed and new drainage and sub-bases were installed – and the Sub Air units installed. This helped them meet USGA specifications.

The course has also been lengthened by the addition of several new tees in preparation for the US Open and the fairways have been narrowed to really test the players.

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If you had told me the first day I started at Woburn that I would get the chance to be involved in the set-up and preparation for a US Open, I would not have believed you. But that dream is coming true this year - thanks to a lot of people - most notably John Clarke, Courses Manager at Woburn, along with valuable support from The Duke of Bedford.

John had the opportunity to participate in the Ohio State University Internship program at Winged Foot where he was involved in the set up for the 97 PGA championship. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity but I could not have done it without the help of another Woburn supporter and former employee, David McGregor.

David is also a past student of the Ohio Program and is now an assistant at The Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in Manassas, Virginia. I started my internship recently at The Robert Trent Jones GC under David’s careful guidance, as I and approximately 10 other carefully selected Ohio State Program interns will be involved in the preparation of Congressional CC for the US Open.

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Being part of a Major Championship will be a great addition to my CV or Resume, as they call it over here in the States, and although I have been part of 10 European Tour events during my time at Woburn, this experience will rank high above anything I have achieved or been part of during my career.

I have been at RTJ for a few months and I can safely say that this was the best decision of my life. The experience and lifestyle at RTJ is excellent and highly recommended. Choosing the Ohio State Program has turned out to be a fantastic decision and the experience and exposure to American turf industry has been of the highest calibre. I will soon be working at the US Open and will see tournament setup at its finest, but the best bit is, that I will be able to network with the best in the world all in one place and that is what makes this such a great learning environment.

Like I said, I would never believe you if you told me I’d get the chance to be involved in a US Open, but the Ohio State Program has made this all possible. As a recruiting British students who show commitment and dedication to this profession. They have the network, infrastructure and connections to make this opportunity happen. Ohio State sponsored me to do my training at The Robert Trent Jones Golf Club, knowing that John Clarke had been preparing me for this position for quite a while.

If you want to get on such a program, you have to be single, 19-28 years old, having completed at least your NVQ level 2 and show commitment and dedication to your golf course. You also have to have experience in the industry and find as much education and training as possible to prepare you to represent your College, your golf course and your country in situations like this. The pressure that is involved is clearly more than I expected but it will be well worth it in the long run.

The hours that are planned during the week of the US Open are set to kick off at 4.00am and be done by 7.30am with evening duties to run from 4.00pm to 8.00pm, but they are contingent on the weather. Congressional have an ample supply of chainsaws, waterpumps, squeegees, bunker rakes and leaf rakes to clear the course in ample time, aided by a solid Sub Air system to get those pros back playing as quickly as possible.

In my preparation and training for the US Open, Scott Furlong, the Director of Operations at The Robert Trent Jones GC, and his staff already had me working longer hours than I would normally do in the middle of the summer in England but I found myself wanting more because every day I was learning something new.

Being a completely different layout and design to what I had been used it helped me to see ways to improve myself. I soon got used to the long hours and the sudden changes in weather and started to settle into a rhythm showing the assistants my ability and also asking them questions about the course to help me get an understanding to why these tasks are done.

In my first week I did mostly spraying, I spray hawked greens for the first time and was shattered by the 14th green. It was 30 degrees centigrade and the humidity was unreal, and then the assistant that I was spraying with told me that we were only half way because RTJ has 10 practice greens.

I can safely say I slept well that night!
The Robert Trent Jones Golf Club, showing the 11th hole (Below); 1st (Right)

Robert Trent Jones truly is a wonderful place to be and I feel very fortunate and privileged to be able to part of their organisation, I am going to make the most of my summer here and I am very lucky to have been given the chance to work here.

I have to thank my family for supporting me, Mike O’Keeffe at Ohio State for believing in me and last but not least, John Clarke and the Duke of Bedford for making all this possible with their support, and willingness to invest in my career by letting me have this great experience.

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selective herbicides used to kill broad-leaved weeds in turf were developed from agricultural chemicals. Much of the first part of this article deals with the search for weed control in cereals, which are members of the same botanical family as grasses; the Gramineae. Therefore, the situation in amenity is the same as in agriculture, in that we are trying to control unwanted dicotyledonous plants in a monocotyledonous crop.

The use of chemicals to kill vegetation is not new; the first examples in history date back to around 1200BC when conquering armies, in what we now call the Middle East, used salt and ash to wipe out their enemy’s crops. In effect, these were chemicals used to spite others; the beneficial use of chemicals took much longer to emerge.

In mid-nineteenth century Germany, a mixture of sulphuric acid and iron sulphate was used in possibly the first selective weed control experiment in European agriculture. However, it was not until later in the 19th century that the early beginnings of the herbicide industry started to have an impact on agricultural practices.

The first products to come to market were copper salts that were found to provide a degree of selective weed control in cereal crops and boost the yield. About a dozen other metal salts including such efficacious offerings as iron sulphate and sodium nitrate soon followed to add to the product portfolio.

These metal salts had a contact action against the broad-leaved weeds, killing the aerial growth but leaving the roots intact, which could allow weed regrowth to occur in many cases. Selectivity was partly due to differences in spray retention on the leaf between the crop and target. The finer, upright leaves of the cereal plants have a waxy coating and therefore retain less of the chemical than the leaves of broad-leaved weeds; which are rounder, have a greater surface area and are often horizontally oriented.

Also, the growing tips of cereals and grasses are less vulnerable to

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