

The object of a course review is to provide accurate information to aid decision making by the management committee. As in any business, those elected or appointed to manage have a responsibility to allocate both financial and human resources. That is to say, how the money will be spent and what work will be done.

A comprehensive course review will allow for a defensible statement of proposed course changes by the management committee and should act as an insurance against pressures for ad-hoc changes by the persuasive and vociferous few.

Pressures to install additional course features are a regular problem for the committee and generally come from members who have admired a particular feature on another course. Their next step is to discuss the idea with their playing partners to decide which hole should receive the benefits of their considerations. Soon they are convinced that their proposal would result in greater visual enjoyment and also improve the playing quality of their selected hole.

At this stage they are likely to canvass support from fellow members who, wishing for a non-controversial life, readily agree. With this additional backing they approach selected committee members and ask for their idea to be presented to the management committee.

What they often fail to consider is: would the suggested feature suit the style of their own course and how would it affect the playing difficulty of the selected hole? However, even if rejected, there is still danger that it may be resurrected in early autumn when a winter programme of work is being prepared. It is at this very moment that the benefit of a course review will allow ill-considered suggestions to be discounted.

A comprehensive course review is definitely not a one man job, for if one person were to investigate all the selected features the first report would be out of date before the last was complete. It will not be the product of a walk around the course, nor will it be the product of a single project. Because of the number of course features involved it is the bringing together of several individual projects.

When the concept has been agreed the management committee will select a project co-ordinator. He will need to be a 'Mr Fix It' who

Reviewing the course

Part 5

THE
OTHER
SIDE
OF THE
GREEN

has extensive knowledge of members' abilities and interests, together with an ability to match talents to individual projects.

Recruitment of suitable labour should not be difficult, as there are growing numbers of members who have taken early retirement. Many will have skills which they would be happy to use for both the benefit of the Club and for their own personal satisfaction.

Together with the project co-ordinator, the management committee will select which course improvements are to be included in the review. Whilst each feature is important in its own right, it is prudent to consider each one individually before allocating priorities. To emphasise this point, consider if it would be prudent to change the playing difficulty of a hole without considering the effect on Stroke Index?

Even though the emphasis of the review will change according to the type of course, most will almost certainly include hole indices and such basic features as greens, tees, bunkers, irrigation and drainage.

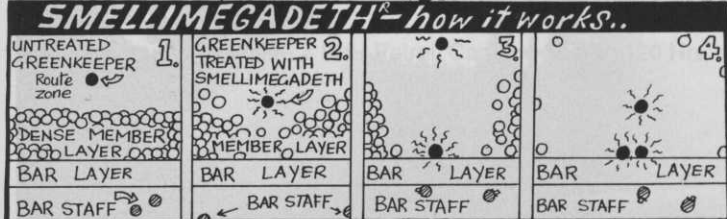
At about this time the project co-ordinator will be preparing for individual projects by collecting information from office archives. During the search it will become apparent how little detailed knowledge is available, for most courses are older than the oldest member and few will have a full set of up-to-date drawings of the golf course and its features.

It is prudent at this stage of the review to take advice from

those best suited to give it – such as the STRI – and a telephone call or discussion with the agronomist during his annual visit will reap rich rewards. He will be able to suggest suitable reading from their own extensive list of publications and supplement discussions with some of their own excellent advisory leaflets.

■ *Mr Lidwell's comments regarding course reviews are no doubt well-meaning, but he makes no mention of involving the most important man of all – one who knows the course better than all others – the head greenkeeper. Further, such 'alterations' often change the essential character of a course to such an extent that the course ceases to represent the intentions and ideas of the original architect. Before embarking on any major course alterations it is, in my opinion, wise to reflect long and hard on the thinking behind the architect's original concept. If the alteration proposed is major surgery, an architect sympathetic to the original architect's plans should, of necessity, be commissioned. Too many Club golfers fancy themselves as golf course architects, with their mistakes and 'follies' glaringly apparent on courses throughout the land – Editor.*

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During the season, the clubhouse-bar can suffer from 'bar compaction'. * Increased traffic, increased thirst, increased compaction. Despite a symbiotic relationship between green staff & bar staff (the latter are often seen on the course), green staff suffer when member compaction sets in. We, at the well-known Pennink chem-labs have developed a vermicide called 'Smellimegadheth', which whilst fulfilling its agricultural task, can also help prevent this appalling condition. In the above diagram, we see a greenkeeper encountering 'bar compaction' in the route-zone, dense member layer prevents him from penetrating to the Bar layer. In the 2nd picture he returns treated with 'Smellimegadheth', we note there is already a loosening of the compacted member layer as our greenkeeper continues to penetrate. By the 3rd picture, the greenkeeper has reached the bar layer and the member-layer resistance has attenuated. Picture 4 shows ideal bar situation. We recommend treatment at: 1 greenkeeper to 3feet of bar. Next month we deal with that perplexing, perennial pest-the 'fair-way hacker' Hiroshima™ flame-wands shows a novel solution! * Common on all courses.

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**DAVID FROST
or WALTER CLARK
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