

An environmental

Over the past 18 months a number of Scottish Golf Clubs have made use of the advice of the Scottish Golf Course Wildlife Adviser.

One of the main roles of the post, which is funded by The Scottish Golf Union, The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, Scottish National Heritage and The Scottish Greenbelt Foundation, is to encourage and advise golf clubs to consider their contribution to the environment.

Of the 70-80 clubs to have contacted the Adviser, a number joined up to the Scottish Golf Course Wildlife Initiative. To do this they have made a commitment to produce an Environmental Plan based on the structure outlined in our recently revised publication, "Golf's Natural Heritage". The production of the

management plan essentially follows the following process:

1. Gathering information about the golf course environment, auditing current practices, identifying species and habitats, assessing historical and landscape qualities and features.
2. Evaluating and understanding the relevance of that information – and the interactive between environmental quality and golf course management.
3. Detailing future objectives aimed at maintaining and enhancing environmental quality. Most objectives also enhance golfing quality.
4. Implementing the objectives – possibly over a three year period.
5. Monitoring and Reviewing the management plans, and planning to the next three year period.

In the past few weeks Torphin

Hill Golf Club in Edinburgh, and Balnagask Golf Club in Aberdeen have reached the stage where their initial plan is produced and the resultant actions are beginning to be implemented. For this reason they have been awarded the Scottish Golf Course Wildlife Charter – a certificate of recognition for their effort to integrate environmental issues into their day-to-day management and longer term vision for the course. Following on from Linlithgow Golf Club's success, these two Clubs will hopefully pave the way for many others who are close to finalising their plans. These other courses include: Hilton Park, Haddington, Mouse Valley, Drumoig and Silverknowes (Edinburgh City Council), Dumbarton, Cochrane Castle, Kilmalcolm, The Dukes Course and Loch Lomond.

In the case of Torphin Hill, the management plan has been driven internally by a team of dedicated members from past and present committees. A wealth of advice and support has come from the Edinburgh Green Belt Trust who have facilitated many large scale projects by securing funding. Indeed, having coordinated the species and habitat survey work, the Trust are now enabling tree planting and pond creating schemes to go ahead. *

Internal projects which will not require capital funding are being taken on by Head Greenkeeper, Rory Campbell. Grassland management for wildflowers, increasing the amount of rough grassland, sensitively disposing of cuttings and adoption of a policy for Integrated Pest Management are all being undertaken by the



An example of the threat to the heathland – gorse encroachment. Measures to control the spread of gorse and rank grasses are to be implemented. One of those measures involves reducing the amount of trolley damage to the heather stands.

plan of action



Two or three water features are to be created utilising the existing ditch. These will be constructed to benefit wildlife and golfer by their gently contouring, strategic positioning and natural characteristics.

greenstaff at no extra cost. The environmental benefit of such steps will be, considerable.

These environmental improvements have been integrated into a wider general plan for all aspects of the course. This will ensure that whatever the Club's vision for the course, stewardship of the environment will remain an integral component.

"The club are delighted to work in partnership at a local level with the Edinburgh Greenbelt Trust and to participate in this national initiative," said Roddy MacGregor, member of the Green Committee and a driving force behind the Torphin Hill Management Plan.

Balnagask, a municipal course maintained by Aberdeen City Council is very different from Torphin Hill. However, although their management objectives are unique to the requirements of the course, the process of environmental planning is the same. By

assessing and evaluating the environmental qualities that currently exist the Council and the Club can appreciate what the best management would be for the site. Environmental Planning is all about making informed judgments.

The plan came about through discussions between the Council, the associated Club, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Golf Course Wildlife Adviser. An assessment of the landscape characteristics of the area and a habitat survey indicated the environmental qualities which could be conserved or enhanced. Much of this focuses on maintaining areas of highly valuable coastal heathland and grassland which also contribute so much to the golfing quality and challenge of the course.

The greenkeeper is Stuart McBain, winner of the second prize in last year's BIGGA Greenkeeping Awards. He will under-

take the works under the supervision of David Grant of the Council's Arts and Leisure Department. The open-mindedness of the club has done much to enable these golf related environmental improvements to take place.

It is hoped that the Council will apply the management planning process established at Balnagask to the other municipal courses under their control.

"The achievements of Torphin Hill and Balnagask demonstrate that golf courses can significantly enhance the environment through sensitive management," said Jonathan Smith, Scottish Golf Course Wildlife Adviser.

"Environmental improvements on a course create opportunities to add further interest, challenge and naturalness. Features which enhance the course for the golfer can also become valuable wildlife habitat and create a more natural landscape character," he added.

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