

TALKING

Six of the country's top men give their views on how course closures can affect their club

Course Closures

Compiled by Malcolm Huntington MBE



Name: Steve Dixon
Course: Kingsknowe GC, Edinburgh
Region: Scotland
Course Type: Parkland
Staff: Course Manager plus four



Name: Mark Mennell
Course: The Fulford GC, York
Region: Northern
Course Type: Parkland and heathland
Staff: Head GK plus five, plus one part-timer



Name: Adrian Porter
Course: Greetham Valley, Oakham
Region: Midland
Course Type: Mixture of parkland and links-type
Staff: Head Greenkeeper, plus seven and two casuals in summer for 45 holes



Name: Kevin Green
Course: The Kendleshire, Bristol
Region: South West and South Wales
Course Type: Parkland
Staff: Course Manager plus six



Name: Stefan Antolik
Course: Cooden Beach, Bexhill-on-Sea
Region: South East
Course Type: Seaside
Staff: Course Manager plus four



Name: Clem Beattie
Course: Allen park Golf Centre, Antrim
Region: Northern Ireland
Course Type: Parkland
Staff: Head Greenkeeper plus four, plus one part-timer in summer. Also three part-timers on the driving range.

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1. Under what circumstances does your golf course close?

1. Severe flooding and heavy snow. Our course is in a valley and if we get excessive rain it tends to flood.

1. We close because of flooding or snow. Really the course closes itself in these circumstances. We go on temporary greens in very frosty weather.

1. Snow is the only reason we really close. The course is well-drained and takes water well, while we play on temporary greens in frost.

1. We close because of adverse weather conditions or waterlogging, snow and sometimes heavy frost. We have seven temporary greens on the back half of the course so members can play some golf when the rest of the course is closed.

1. It floods regularly, particularly at high tide when the sea comes over the boundary wall. We had 100 acres under a foot of water at one time.

1. We close mainly because of waterlogging as we are on heavy ground. Also because of snow and when we spray.

HEADS

2. Is the decision left solely to you or do other people have an input?

2. It is mainly my decision, although I have to inform my greens committee Chairman about the closure.

2. It is solely my decision whether to close the course. I tell the professional who informs the General Manager, or vice versa.

2. I make closure decisions. Our course is proprietor-owned and sometimes he comes down to suggest we close, but never to say we stay open.

2. It is solely up to me on whether we close. I am responsible to the Directors so I would inform one of them and also the pro shop.

2. Closure is left solely to me, or my Deputy if I am not there. We get no committee interference. In our case closure is self-explanatory.

2. I decide when we close because of flooding, but if it is 50-50 on a frosty day the Manager has an input and we decide between us.

3. On average how many days is your course closed per year?

3. We were closed for five days in 1999 and there have been times when snow has caused us to close for a week. I would say it is five to 10 days on average over the last eight years.

3. I remember we closed for five weeks because of heavy snow a few years back. I would say we are not normally closed for more than 10-12 days each year.

3. We closed on seven days last year, but I would say the average is five to 10 days each year.

3. Our course is only three years old so we protect it whenever we can so that it doesn't suffer. At the moment we are closed on average 25 days per year but I would hope that this will be reduced to 10-12 days when we get thoroughly established.

3. We closed for 17 days last year, but haven't been closed yet this year. I would say 15 days is the average.

3. Because our course is on clay land it tends to get very wet after heavy rain and we have been closed 14 days during one year. Quite often we close a number of holes and leave some open.

4. What arrangements are made to inform the membership of a closure?

4. We have a general notice board next to the pro's shop and near the 1st tee where we can slot in course closures and also when there is any disturbance such as spraying, verti-cutting or top dressing.

4. We have "Course Closed" signs at the entrance gate to the course in the car park; next to the pro shop and also at the back of the 1st tee. I also use a mobile phone to inform the pro shop.

4. We announce closures on the notice-board in our car park near the changing rooms and also telephone the Seniors' Captain on Mondays or the Lady Captain on Tuesdays if we have to close.

4. We have a "Course Closed" sign in the car park and if there is a chance of re-opening after rain members are kept informed on an hourly basis at the pro shop where they would book in to play.

4. We inform the pro shop by 8am on the day of closure. Similarly if there is a need to ban trolleys or buggies.

4. We have a "Course Closed" sign at the entrance to the course and also halfway up the driveway. Reception is informed so that members can telephone in and be told of the situation.

5. Is there any one main reason why your course closes and if so what is planned to improve the situation?

5. Kingsknowe has a drainage programme for the next three years where we will upgrade everything. The low lying areas are verti-drained weekly and overall there is hardly a day goes by when we don't verti-drain.

5. The main reason we close is flooding after heavy rain. We verti-drain a lot and have drained every bad spot on the course in the 10 years I have been Head Greenkeeper. But we are luckier than many because if we have had heavy rain in the morning and it stops by noon, then by 3pm it is playable once more because of the good drainage.

5. Snow is the only major problem, but we also occasionally close to do hollow-tining and top dressing for a day. When everything looks a bit tired in winter we might give one of the courses a rest for a day or two.

5. Flooding is the main reason why we would close. We have a schedule of aeration, solid tining and slitting in spring, summer and autumn to improve matters. This is done on a frequent basis, particularly on the walk-on, walk-off areas near the greens and tees.

5. Our course is very flat and it floods regularly near the top end close to the sea. We have 11 kilometres of dykes and have created 16 ponds in the eight years I have been there. We also have a new reservoir and we can pump 3,000 gallons of water a minute off the course. Occasionally we get tide-locked.

5. As I said our ground is very heavy and we are doing all we can to improve matters by installing an improved pipe drainage system. We also aerate, slit and solid tine as often as possible.