

Paving the Way for the Future

Scott MacCallum looks at the humble cart path and how it can help to transform a golf club.

Perhaps it's as we get older, but it seems as though modern day living involves looking for labour saving opportunities, or it could even be that we're lulled by marketing gurus into thinking that all self respecting golfers should travel in style.



I'm referring to the fact that more and more golf clubs are offering buggies as an option and that as a result more and more clubs are looking to build cart paths to accommodate them and reduce wear on the playing surface.

Paths are what could be described as a necessary evil at modern day clubs. It can be hard to make them look attractive but they do an important job and with buggy hire a potentially lucrative revenue stream for clubs finding a way of integrating them into the layout of the course is becoming increasingly worthwhile.

Not every golf course is capable of coping with a cart path. Space is an obvious issue. Many courses were built even before cars were a popular form of transport never mind buggies to transport golfers around a golf course and with that in mind, space around greens in particular was not built into plans for any future path. Health and Safety issues are also key, with slopes often rendering paths and buggies unusable - courses split by roads and devoid of tunnels or bridges are also not conducive to buggy golf.

If a course is deemed suitable for four wheeled travel as well as the more traditional two legged variety a path is much the best way to ensure damage to the playing areas is kept to a minimum. Giving free rein to buggies can cause erosion in some areas and compaction in others while, although it sounds all too obvious, a path is far in away the best way to ensure golfers stick to a prescribed route.

If a cart path has been identified as an option to explore the next decision is what it should be made from and there again there are several options to look into.

Woodchippings or shell can be ideal for some clubs for footpaths but not so good for cart paths as retaining the materials within the confines of the path is extremely difficult.

Concrete or paving is much more efficient and long lasting but is expensive to lay.

Other options include artificial turf which assists in blending the path into the rest of the golf course.

"Verdeturf is an 18mm open pile artificial grass, which is UV and colour stabilised. The tufted pile of the grass is to be filled to within 2-3mm off the surface with kiln dried sand. This sand holds the grass in place, eliminating the necessity for nails or other fixings. The sand also protects the tufts from spiked shoes and provides a natural appearance to the finished installation," said Beth Lucas, of Verdeturf.

The company also produces Super Verdeggrass which does not require a sand dressing so should be held in place with either all-weather adhesive or galvanised nails. Super Verdeggrass can also be used for covering bridges, where the weight of the sand in the Verdeturf may be too heavy. It is also very popular on areas near the clubhouse, where a non sand filled product is preferred," said Beth.

Tenax tackles the problem of erosion with their GridLock pavers. These are injection moulded cellular structures which hold the stabilising material in place preventing any further erosion.

"Manufactured from HDPE, GridLock is resistant to oil, chemicals and extremes of temperature and has the strength to withstand loads in excess of 170 tonnes per square metre," explained Michael Carr, of Tenax



Gridlock Border



No paths and buggies roam the course unrestricted

Photograph supplied by Eric Hepworth

"You can lay the on top of existing materials. I think it was over shell at Bognor and it will work beautifully while they are great for areas around the clubhouse and any soggy parts of the course," explained Tom, who said he'd coloured chippings in his rockery at home.

So there are options out there for any club looking to improve their golf course from a health and safety or revenue generating perspective.

Thanks for Verdegrass, Tenax and Castcrete Ltd for their co-operation with this feature.

"Installation of the interlocking pavers is easily carried out with very little ground preparation required since the pavers are simply laid on to a 25mm sub-base of sand or other granular material. St Neots GC is one of the clubs in the UK which has gone down the GridLock route."

Another material which is finding favour in modern day path production also carries environmental credentials in that it owns its existence to recycling.

Rubber chippings produced from old tyres reduce the wear of buggy tyres, are quiet and once they have been laid compact to make a solid surface - although they are not suitable for sloping areas.

"They can also be coloured to blend in to the surroundings," said Tom Brooker, Director of Castcrete Ltd.

"We sold an initial batch of half a tonne to Bognor Regis Golf Club and they came back once they'd tried it and bought another nine tonnes and then a further five after that," he explained.



Castcrete path



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