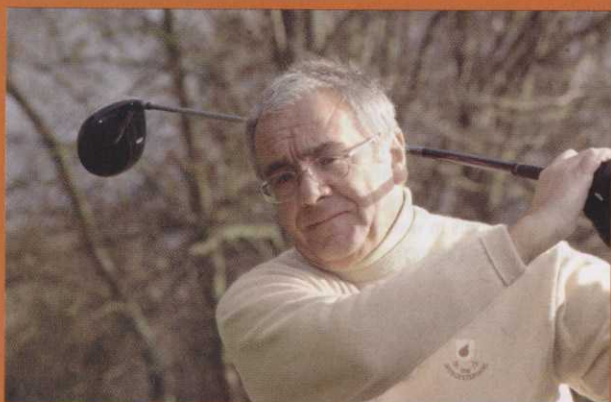


What preventative steps can I take?

Michael Shaw from the National Golf Clubs' Advisory Association says that golf clubs can minimise the disruption to their courses with a little careful planning.

"Whenever the threat of a hosepipe ban rears its head, Golf Club Managers and Greenkeepers tend to panic. Everyone, including members, has to be sensible and bear in mind that with the British weather it is simply not possible to have Augusta style courses throughout the year."



Michael Shaw of the NGCAA

Michael says clubs should follow these simple steps:

- 1) Check the exact details of the drought order. It might just ban hoses but not sprinklers, and an order wouldn't normally apply to bore holes or water saved and recycled by the club. Once a drought order has been granted then the relevant water authority must inform its consumers either by post or through the local press as to the extent of the restrictions being placed upon them.
- 2) Meet your greenkeeper and agronomist. Make sure you discuss the situation, including the worst case scenario, and work out an plan action. This might include reducing the size of the greens or not dewing the course each morning.
- 3) Brown isn't a problem. Accept that keeping the grass alive is the one overriding issue. This doesn't necessarily mean having it a beautiful green colour the whole time!
- 4) Contact your neighbouring water authority. It might well be that your neighbouring water authority doesn't have a ban in place. Most are happy to sell their waste water but bear in mind the storage issues.

Regarding the vexed question of whether or not members can claim a refund for the days on which they are unable to play because the course is out of commission, Shaw is adamant:

"Clubs can rest assured that members don't have a leg to stand on - although clubs try their utmost, no club will ever guarantee that a course will be fit for play 365 days a year. Given the British weather, this would be madness!"

What would you do? Desperate times call for desperate measures.

Billy McMillan, Greenkeeper for Tyrrells Wood GC in Leatherhead, kindly took the time to tell me how the golf club - recognised as one of the finest golfing venues in Surrey - was coping, since their water supply was cut on May 27.

As soon as Sutton and East Surrey Waters Drought Order, (restricting non-essential use of water), came into effect, the first thing that Tyrrells Wood did, was inform membership. Billy explains:

"We made membership aware of the situation and explained that it would be a tough year ahead." Billy, who described the drought as the most disastrous to happen to golf courses in the south east in decades, continued: "We put a contingency plan in place and prioritized the greens, but this in turn causes stress factors with the tees. We have employed good greenkeeping. Our cutting frequency has gone down, therefore the grass is longer needing more top dressings.

Tyrrells Wood are relying on their borehole for 45% of their water, should the flow rate in the river Nole go below a certain level, then the worry is that their abstraction licence may be cut by 50%.

Billy explains that the fact of the matter is: "Should water be stopped, grass will die." Drastic measures are being considered if the drought intensifies, the main one being buying water. At present the golf club pays Sutton and East Surrey Water 97p per cubic metre for water, should the club buy "grey" water - water that comes out of sewage works or water that hasn't passed sufficient tests to become drinking water and is therefore not fit for human consumption - they will have to pay over 20 times the market value at £22 - £25 per cubic metre.

Billy's brother Ian McMillan, Course Manager at Walton Heath GC - who recently hosted the US Open Qualifier - in Tadworth, Surrey, has recently bought two tankers and is training staff to ferry water from another resource.



Tyrrells Wood GC