

A QUICK GUIDE TO...

Course Surveys

Archie Stewart let's you know how to make the most of your survey

1. Define your aims

Golf course surveys can cover many aspects of course management. They can show everything from the legal extents of the course, the area of all the playing surfaces, the differing habitats within the course, to providing the distance measurements and maps for scorecards. When commissioning a survey think about what you want it to show, now and in the future. Financial considerations are uppermost at the moment, it is not necessary to have all the bells and whistles from the outset.

2. Take ownership

Accurate surveys are an essential part of course management so it is important that the management team are involved in all aspects of the survey and that they ensure the survey is used fully. The golf course is the biggest asset the club has so it makes sense it is recorded properly. The information the survey provides should be used by green staff and office staff in the day-to-day running of the club.

3. Communicate

Maps are an ideal method of communication between course management and committees, committees and members, the club and the general public. Up to date maps can be used to show new bunkers or explain work schedules. Maps can be used as signboards to show the location of public footpaths.

4. Look to the past...

Greenkeepers don't work forever, some even retire, so use a survey to record all the details that may be kept in the greenkeeper's head, so the knowledge can be passed on. Recording the position of drains that have been replaced or repaired in the past will save the future ground staff a lot of digging and head scratching.

5...to plan for the future

A course survey is like a snapshot of the course; golf courses change and evolve with time.



The survey should be updated regularly to show changes. The initial cost and benefit of the survey are wasted if it is just kept in a drawer.

6. New developments

When planning new developments record the location of underground services such as irrigation pipes, drains and cables as they are put in. Even if there is no existing accurate survey, GPS can show the as laid location and it can be added as a layer if a survey is done in the future.

7. Accuracy

Many courses will have members with either recreational GPS or golfing GPS units such as Skycaddie, while these will provide a basis for maps and distance they are not accurate enough for a full course survey. Accurate information will bring cost savings, by knowing the correct area for each green, tee and fairway combined with accurate calibration of spreaders and sprayers will ensure correct application of fertiliser and sprays.

8. Adding to the survey

Your course survey should be a living document that records the course now and is able to take that information into the future, so be prepared to invest in it. Ensure that the first base map is

compatible with other systems so that in the future it will be possible to add details such as soil type and soil sampling information, rainfall, any constraints like SSSI, rights of way, listed buildings or sites of archaeological interest.

9. Provide time

Most surveys will come in digital format to be used with computer mapping, so bear in mind that provision of a computer and training will help utilise the benefits of the survey for planning and record keeping.

10. Action

While changing weather patterns will put strain on drainage and irrigation systems and the financial storms batter budgets, investment in a course survey today will provide a good return at all levels of golf course management.

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