

Compost...

The environmentally friendly way forward

Having forged a reputation as one of the most challenging venues to have ever hosted The Open, Carnoustie is now establishing a strong set of environmental credentials as well. Paul Mathers, of WRAP, discusses how quality compost is being used to maintain its three prestigious links courses...

Recently Carnoustie, which hosted two of the most exciting Open Championships of the last dozen years in 1999 and 2007, has been turning its attention towards its environmental standing, ensuring that the 46,000 golfers who play the course each year do so in the knowledge that they are playing on one of the greenest golf courses in the world.

As part of this ongoing commitment, the Club has produced an Integrated Environmental Action Plan which sets out how it addresses the careful management of turf grass and non-playing area habitats. This covers a wide range of environmental activities such as water management, waste reduction and energy efficiency in a bid to

improve Club-wide environmental performance.

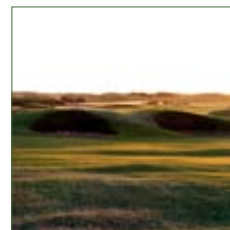
One particular aspect of this commitment is the Club's decision to trial the use of high quality compost in the repair and maintenance of all three links courses. Compost manufactured to the BSI PAS 100 specification, which ensures quality and consistency to the highest standard, was first used by green-keeping staff to improve the growing conditions of ground under repair, and subsequently as a constituent element of divot mixes.

The first of these trials was in 2007 when Carnoustie's green-keeping staff needed to re-model and re-seed an area of rough and semi-rough adjacent to the 18th green, just short of the Barry Burn. Crucially, because the Club closes for no longer than two weeks each

year, this urgent work needed to be completed as quickly as possible so the area could be back into play. It was critical also that natural flora was protected, and that native grasses were encouraged to re-establish.

Course Superintendent, John Philp, worked in close consultation with the sports, amenity and landscape supplier Rigby Taylor and applied organic matter to the areas in the form of BSI PAS 100 compost. Around seven tonnes of quality compost was locally sourced from Forth Resource Management in Edinburgh, and applied to the area to improve soil consistency and encourage rapid re-establishment of grass.

The results were remarkable. Because the soil in the Carnoustie area tends to be sandy, all water





and nutrients quickly drain away making support for vegetation limited at best. But though the use of that quality compost, nutrient and water content improved and enabled vegetation to re-establish swiftly and healthily. Importantly, the ground under repair was also brought back into play in half the normal amount of time allowed for such work.

Based on the success of this trial, the Carnoustie team were keen to examine other application opportunities. With its ready and plentiful supply of nitrogen and phosphorus and other nutrients and minerals, BSI PAS 100 compost was found to be an ideal material for divot replacement.

A further 30 tonnes of BSI PAS 100 certified compost – prepared to a 6mm grade – was sourced and

mixed at a ratio of 3 to 1 (sand to compost) to produce the basis of a divot mixture. Grass seed was added, alongside a seaweed meal to provide additional micro nutrients and mirror the make-up of the natural seaside links soil. The divot mixture has been a great success as well. Grass flourishes and colouration of the turf matches the rest of the course seamlessly, giving a highly professional finish. John Philp and his team are now looking at how BSI PAS 100 compost can be used in a topdressing mix for use in weaker, more drought susceptible areas.

Crucially, the trials at Carnoustie also resulted in significant cost savings. Compared to fensoil, for example, the use of BSI PAS 100 compost resulted in a saving approaching 30% - or around £13

per tonne. Encouraging, this saving came in part from the significant reduction in transport costs; while fensoil is sourced at the other end of the country in the south east of England, BSI PAS 100 compost can be sourced locally from Edinburgh and all around the UK.

The example of Carnoustie demonstrates that world class results can be achieved more economically, and more environmentally friendly, than by traditional methods. And for greenkeepers keen to replicate Carnoustie's success, WRAP provides a comprehensive Compost Suppliers Directory that enables greenkeeping teams to search by postcode for their nearest BSI PAS 100 compost. This means that every golf course in the UK now has the opportunity to emulate Carnoustie's move to a greener links.



about the author

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For more information on how Carnoustie Golf Club has been using BSI PAS 100 compost, visit www.wrap.org.uk/sportsturf or call Paul Mathers at WRAP on 01295 817899.

