



On the Soapbox

A stage on which people within the industry can express their viewpoint

Felling Trees

It always amazes me how many times I see “dubious” felling on a golf course and when asked usually the management are unaware that permission is required if you fell more than five cubic metres of timber in a calendar quarter (two cubic metres if you sell it).

So what is five cubic metres of timber?

A tree in the eyes of the law is determined by its diameter at 1.3 metres from the ground - if the diameter is above eight centimetres then it is classed as a tree.

Penalties can be severe for illegal felling and apply to all parties involved; on conviction a fine of up to £2500 or twice the value of the trees whichever is higher may be imposed and generally a restocking order will be issued. (The fine could potentially be per tree)

Further restrictions may also apply if you have a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on the site. These are made by the Local Planning Authority (normally the local council). TPO's prevent the felling, topping, lopping or uprooting of any tree without permission from the planning authority.

A similar situation occurs if you are within a conservation area where again you would have to apply to the local authority for permission for any work on a tree.

In reality the best way to gain permission is through a felling licence which is obtained from the Forestry Commission (FC) and can last up to five years. However, as there have been so many cases of illegal felling on golf courses the FC are now reluctant to issue a licence without some sort of plan.

It is therefore best to seek professional advice before applying for a licence as sustainability, timber volume and the impact on the environment and landscape are all considered by the FC when assessing applications.

Also, an experienced forester will know what is required for an application (mapping and measuring areas, timber volume and percentage thinning, etc) and perhaps more importantly what will make the FC reluctant to grant a licence!

The other advantage of professional advice is that you will have a plan to work to enabling the club to cost the work

effectively and undertake the management of their trees and woodland efficiently.

Felling trees can be a sensitive issue with club members for whom sometimes logic goes out of the window.

Therefore, any substantive evidence is a help in convincing the membership that tree management is an essential part of the agronomic management of the course.

The misconception that trees and woodlands will look after themselves still abounds, however there is a huge difference between conservation and preservation and many golf clubs have a vocal minority who want to preserve everything.

They don't realise that they are not actually preserving what they find so dear, because it is ever changing, it is a living entity which will evolve and change naturally if left unmanaged.

Heathland, is a transitory ecosystem which will revert to woodland if left unmanaged, it is therefore essential to manage both the woodland and heath if the status quo is to be maintained.

Woodland will normally regenerate at

As well as creating landscape and wildlife interest. However care has to be taken as to their effect on the agronomy, strategy and landscape of the golf course.

They form a strong three dimensional hazard which can easily destroy the intended strategy of a hole.

Trees are a dynamic entity, increasing in size over time, often encroaching into the line of play.

They can reduce air and light penetration to the grass sward pre-disposing it to disease and can cause uneven wear on tees as players naturally favour the un-impeded line of play.

It is therefore essential to have a planned holistic approach to the management of the trees and woodlands on the course.

All clubs which have trees and woodland should have a management programme which assesses the arboreal landscape taking into account the appropriateness of trees in relation to their location.

Further information is available from the FC website

www.forestry.gov.uk/website/forestry.nsf/byunique/infd-6cdfkus

A living entity which will evolve and change naturally if left unmanaged

its edges but with modern day pressures this is often impossible and the woodland therefore requires intervention in order to redress the balance if it is to remain sustainable.

However, where it adjoins heather it will cast seed into the heath and will regenerate vigorously especially in the case of birch and oak.

We have been managing the woodlands of Britain since before the Roman invasion and what is often perceived as natural woodland is actually highly managed woodland; an under-storey of bluebells for instance requires light to the woodland floor and a lack of aggressive shade casting ground flora such as bramble or bracken. Management is therefore required if the ecosystem is to be maintained.

Trees provide many benefits whether it is individuals, small woodlands or large forests. They provide many tangible benefits such as screening, shelter, noise reduction and seclusion.



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