

DRAINAGE PROBLEM? WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU CALL IN THE CONTRACTORS...

When it comes to sportsturf drainage, there can't be many companies in the UK more experienced than Wiltshire based MJ Abbott. From humble beginnings more than 40 years ago, they've established themselves as one of the industry's leading contractors. From challenging ground conditions to challenging weather, it's fair to say the company has learnt a thing or two along the way about the things that allow the smooth progression of a major drainage installation.

Contracts Director Nigel Wyatt shares his thoughts on the subject

Consultant-v-Contractor

If you're planning a major drainage project, you may wish to seek the advice of a consultant. This has several benefits. Consultants are independent so you get sound, unbiased advice. They'll be able to discuss their past projects with you and will make recommendations which suit your site and budget. Alternatively, you may want to oversee the project yourself and appoint a contractor. Here's how both processes work:

Contractor

Choose a reputable contractor, preferably one which is a member of the Land Drainage Contractors Association. The LDCA (www.ldca.org) publishes guidelines which set out the standard of workmanship and materials for sportsturf drainage. These guidelines are recognised by sporting bodies such as the standard to which sportsturf drainage should be installed.

Seek recommendation from your peers. Ask them about their relationship with the contractor. Were they happy with the workmanship? Did the installation go smoothly and, importantly, would they use them again?

When drawing up a shortlist, select up to three to choose one from. Ensure parity of specifications as tenders may differ significantly.

Consultant

A consultant will begin by undertaking a site investigation. From there he or she will produce a design, prepare a bill of quantities and a full specification.

They will assist you in the selection of a contractor and will issue tender documents. They will then evaluate the tenders and after the appointment of a contractor, they'll oversee the work.



Nigel Wyatt on site
Picture courtesy of Mike Beardall

What's next?

When the contractors' tenders have been received, remember to compare specifications as well as quotes. The cheapest quote may not necessarily be the best value for money. If any part of the tender is unclear, ask for further information.

Awarding the contract

When you've made your selection, agree timings and payment terms with the contractor. This may include retentions and the provision of aftercare once the job's complete.

Health & Safety

Be aware of your obligations relating to Health & Safety. If the project is expected to take longer than 30 working days (or 500 man days), then the golf club is legally obliged to appoint a qualified CDM (Construction Design and Management) Coordinator who will notify the Health and Safety Executive about the project as part of CDM (2007) regulations using a form F10.

The CDM Coordinator is responsible for appointing a competent contractor, ensuring that the relevant health and safety procedures are in place and that they're adhered to. Regardless of the need for notification, the contractor will produce their own health and safety construction plans which will include risk assessments, traffic management and method statements for the work being undertaken.

Carry out all necessary service searches for existing services such as gas, water and electricity. Make plans showing old and existing drainage, such as clay drains, available to the contractor.

Progress & Supervision

It goes without saying that you'll want the very best for your golf course. Carry out your own quality control checks by:

- Confirming that the on-site team are qualified and experienced
- Ensuring that suitable, well-maintained machinery is used
- Checking the specifications and quality of backfill materials (ie gravel and sand) when delivered



Drainage lines at Fairmont St Andrews - Copyright MJ Abbott Limited





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- Inspecting both the trenches and junctions before they're backfilled
- Expecting a clean and tidy site
Obtain a plan from the contractor showing the 'as constructed' layout.

How much will it cost?

Costs are determined by design and the design is determined by use, the present conditions and the resources available. This will take into account the Club's expectations, the quality of the facility and the standard of aftercare required.

Settlement

Settlement can occur in areas with high clay content in the subsoil. During times of drought, shrinkage of the soil particles causes the settlement of drainage trench lines and remedial work needs to be carried out to avoid depressions in the surface. You should make sure that remedial measures to cater for trench settlement are agreed in advance with your contractor. You should also discuss disturbance, reinstatement and aftercare. The construction phase will create disturbance and the timing of the project will affect it.

Aftercare

Most contractors will provide an aftercare service which may include watering, overseeding and fertiliser applications. It is generally accepted that the contractor should return the site to the state it was in prior to work commencing.

Summary

So, to get the installation that's right for you:

- Get good advice
- Talk to others who have had work done
- Employ a reputable contractor
- Don't necessarily go for the cheapest
- Get 'as built' drawings
- Be aware of the effects of the drainage installation on the playing surface

The Course Manager

Finally, a word about the Course Manager. Their role in any major project and their working relationship with the contractor is critical to its progression and successful completion.

Over the 30 years I've been involved with drainage projects across the UK, I've identified ten things that Course Managers can do to help their installation run smoothly. They are:

1. Forward the details of existing drainage and services, outfalls etc. to the contractor before the project commences
2. Be aware of relevant Health & Safety issues and regulations
3. When planning the process, consider the time of year. To minimise disruption to the course, installation should take place during spring, summer or autumn.
4. Tendering – Ensure there's an adequate turn around time during the tender process to allow the contractor to deliver the tender back – 10 days isn't sufficient!
5. Draw up a plan of working practices with your contractor so you are both aware of each



Trenching at Northop GC - Copyright MJ Abbott Ltd

other's expectations and limitations

6. Maintain open channels of communication – keep involved and up to date with progress

7. Approve all materials before use - Check the quality.

8. Be realistic – Have clear expectations and be prepared for a small amount of disruption to your course

9. Keep your Greens Committee informed on progress with regular updates so they can keep their golfers informed

10. Keep in contact with your contractor - Good client/contractor relationships are built over time as contractors become accustomed to the site and staff. When the project is completed, maintain contact with your contractor and keep them informed of progress. They are there to support you moving forwards.

Phil Chiverton has worked with MJ Abbott since beginning work at The Grove in February 2001. He believes that there are many advantages in maintaining an ongoing relationship with a contractor.

"Drainage is something we're constantly looking to improve. Working with Abbotts, we continually assess the situation to identify improvements we can make, whether that's sand or gravel banding or pipe drainage. Because they carried out the initial drainage works at the Club, they have our drainage network installed on their GPS, enabling us to map

out the areas which require attention."

"It's important to implement good working practices when contractors are on site. Before work commences, I sit down with them and put together a scope of works which includes method statements and risk assessments. I make arrangements for the contractor's on-site team to have access to showers and hot food and we talk about how we can complete the work with minimal disruption and damage to the course."



Trench at Northop GC - Copyright MJ Abbott Ltd

NORTHERN NEW BOYS

FEATURE

Machrihanish Dunes

Scotland is awash with exciting new golf developments. Mark Alexander speaks to the greenkeepers behind some of the most impressive new courses

The golfing landscape of Scotland is changing. The old guard of iconic courses is being joined by a new breed of designs etched out of the earth with more than a respectful nod towards the heritage of the past. With towering dunes, unforgiving gorse bushes and fast-running fairways, as well as a warming nip at the 19th hole, these new golf courses are designed to rub shoulders with the principalities of Troon and Dornoch and the legend of Machrihanish.

Despite the formidable legacy of Scotland's famous links, these young upstarts are far from shrinking violets, each being set in remarkable surroundings and featuring routings that emulate the styles of a bygone era. Rather than shirking away from their forbearers' achievements, this new lot are taking them head on.

Machrihanish Dunes

On a remote and wayward spindle of land that forms the Mull of Kintyre on Scotland's West coast, an audacious £30 million investment by an international business consortium is creating an oceanfront course that defies the modern principles of design and construction. Laid out by David McLay Kidd, the architect behind Brandon Dunes in Oregon, Queenwood and the new Castle Course in St Andrews, Machrihanish Dunes will follow the natural twists and turns of this prime

piece of links land for 7,300 yards. With six greens and five tees bordering the sea, it will be exposed to all that Scotland's magical west coast can throw at it.

The place is already home to the legendary Machrihanish course, made famous by its 428-yard, opening hole Battery which seems destined to be forever known as the greatest opening hole in golf. It's certainly the type of hole that every golfer would love to play with an opening drive that crosses the crashing waves that pummel Machrihanish Bay. Saying that, the rest of it isn't bad either. In fact parts of this ancient links look as if they have been touched by God, as Old Tom Morris implied when he came here to extend the original 10-hole course in 1879.

Today another keeper of the greens has arrived from St Andrews to make a bit of history. Euan Grant left his post as Head Greenkeeper of the Old Course in 2007. He was the eighth man to take up the post since Old Tom's retirement in 1903. He had been in St Andrews for just three years.

"After having done an Open in 2005, I'd pretty much realised my greenkeeping goals," he recalls.

"I was in a comfort zone and I felt I needed to push myself and the opportunities to do that weren't in St Andrews. At the end of my time there, I was responsible for a big team with a seemingly empty pot of money. We cut grass, raked bunkers and changed holes, but I wanted more. I wanted to make an impact."

He couldn't have chosen a better place. Machrihanish Dunes isn't merely a new links



Euan Grant, at his desk.

course cleverly positioned next to an old master. Brightside Leisure Development, the team behind the project, has already acquired two hotels in the area with the first reopening this summer sporting a new, boutique look. There are plans for luxury villas and a spectacular clubhouse as well as other projects in the offing.

And the course itself is certainly an eye-opener. Spread over 259 acres of prime links land, the course falls under a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Such a classification would make most developers wince, just ask Donald Trump, but Grant suggests the restrictions that surround the course and its construction have created a unique opportunity to shape golf holes as they were done in Old Tom's days.

"If you can imagine a modern architect sitting in his office designing a golf course to fit into a piece of land, they'd move hill and mountains to make it work," said Grant.

"We couldn't do that. The green sites were identified, rabbit damage became the bunkers



Rowallan Castle

and tee positions were shifted within reason to make the bunkers hazards. David routed the golf course through the natural landform, which is how it used to happen.”

In fact, the greens and tees were constructed by stripping turf off pre-determined areas and were then shaped and seeded. Beyond that, the team was severely restricted in what they could do but were required to tie in the green surrounds with the native fauna and landforms. More time-consuming was the redistribution of the stripped turf around the site, as Grant explains.

“Bare areas could only be filled with turf from the site, so when greens were stripped of turf, that turf was used to fill in damaged areas but the aspect, distance from the shoreline and elevation had to be similar. So a south-facing slope, three metres above sea level had to go to a south-facing slope, three metres above sea level. It was like a patchwork quilt and very labour intensive but we can genuinely say we did things correctly.”

Machrihanish Dunes is due to open next year.

Rowallan Castle

The Mull of Kintyre isn't the only place that presents a challenge for new golf developments. Just across the North Channel in Ayrshire, a prestigious golf, hotel and leisure complex is being developed on 600 acres of historic countryside. With an anticipated total spend of £70 million, Rowallan Castle Golf Club features two beautiful castles surrounded by rolling parklands. The oldest castle dates back to the 13th century and is the



Robert Johnson

birthplace of Elizabeth Muir; mother of Robert II the first Stewart king of Scotland. The second was added in the late 19th century and will provide the main accommodation for the new resort.

The estate was bought by Niall Campbell 19 years ago from Lord Rowallan's Trustees. It was a home-coming for Campbell, whose ancestors owned the estate between 1690 and the late 19th century, and became the setting for local-boy Colin Montgomerie's first design on home soil. Yet despite the neighbourhood ties, it took 12 years to get permission to develop the land and buildings, all of which are listed. The venture went to a full public enquiry in 1997 and eventually received full planning consent in 2001.

“There's quite a bit of legislation involved in this place, which I'm still coming to terms with,” said Robert Johnson, Rowallan's Superintendent.

“One of the reasons for the deep bunkering

is that the architect was restricted in how much earth he could move, so the bunkering, contouring of the greens and green complexes was how he made his mark on the golf course.”

After an 11-year stint at nearby Williamwood Golf Club and four years before that at Newport Golf Club, Johnston jumped at the chance of getting involved in a new-build project.

“Ross McMurray, the architect at European Golf Design, asked Jim Mackenzie, Celtic Manor's Director of Golf, if he knew anybody who would be interested in doing the grow-in and he suggested me,” said Johnston.

“I'd never been involved at such an early stage. I'd maintained golf courses, obviously, and I'd been involved in some reconstruction and design changes but to get in when the thing was just starting, well, not everybody gets that opportunity.”

Johnston arrived on site in June 2007, by which time the course was already taking shape.

“When I arrived, 50% of the construction work had been done and you could already see it was going to be a fantastic golf course,” he said.

He joined two of the estate's maintenance staff, who he's training up, and now hopes to amass a 10-man team with seasonals by the time the course is up and running.

Although the course is certainly taking shape, there's still plenty to do. “We're thinking along the lines of a full, perforated drainage system,” said Johnston.

“We've got a flash-flood system and existing field drainage at the moment, so it's not that we

don't have drainage; it's just that we don't have sufficient drainage to make this a top-class golf resort at the moment. Part of my brief is to look at the priority areas that are must-drain areas such as walk-ons, walk-offs, greens and tees. It's going to be an ongoing process."

The final spec looks impressive. As well as a 70-room hotel designed under the supervision of renowned hotelier Gordon Campbell Gray, there will also be a state-of-the-art spa, cinema and nine-hole par-three course as well as Europe's only playable 19th hole on the main course.

"The expectations are high," said Johnston. "It's a Colin Montgomerie course so it's got to be the top of the tree as far as presentation and

management is concerned. As a career move, it's a big step up the ladder."

Rowallan Castle Golf Club is expected to open officially next year.

Castle Stuart Golf Links

Located six miles east of Inverness and banking onto the Moray Firth, the site for Castle Stuart Golf Links provides fantastic views across the Kessock Bridge to the Black Isle and also to Castle Stuart itself. The stunning location of this new pay-and-play course is no accident however. The project's developer and co-designer has something of a reputation for hunting down

tracks with unbelievable potential and it looks like he's done it again.

Mark Parsinen made his name when he transformed a stretch of unremarkable Fife farmland into the striking contours of Kingsbarns. Here too, views played a major part in creating a course that regularly appears at the top of many golfers' wish lists.

His much-anticipated return to golf course development has utilised the same design principles that made Kingsbarns such an instant success but with the added interest of a 57-room boutique hotel with spa facilities, 148 resort-ownership lodges and apartments and a possible second links course. That said, much of the 7,000-yard course has



been routed along the coast in a similar fashion to Kingsbarns and all the holes have been orientated to take advantage of noted landmarks.

The layout, which was completed by Parsinen and Gil Hanse, was hugely dependant on the existing scenery and the landscape mosaic created by the onsite team, as Course Manager Chris Haspell explained. "The landscape has been really important to Mark and Gil, but we've also transported in heather and marim. When we've finished, we'll have planted around 5,000m² of sustainable heather and used about 200,000 plants to create that dune-edge look."

Haspell, who's been responsible for seeding and shaping at Castle Stuart and originally from Cheshire, ended a 12-year placement in Denmark to be a part of the project.

"The reputation of Kingsbarns was a big draw

as was working with Mark. The location was also important because it's nice to be in the Highlands. I mean, just look around you."

The setting is certainly stunning and the design is equally impressive which must have resonated with Haspell who was designing, building and remodelling golf courses in Denmark before his move to Scotland. But despite his construction credentials he believes his knowledge of fescue grasses secured him the job.

"I've done a lot of work with fescues and that's what they wanted to use here. Because of environmental restrictions in Denmark, we'd been dealing with it for a long time, indeed the six courses that I designed and built over there were done with pure fescue. So it just snowballed from there."

Apart from the location and specific challenges

associated with new builds, Haspell said working with Parsinen has been an extraordinary learning experience.

"In the 23 years I've worked in golf, working with Mark definitely was the best year for learning. Mark tends to have a view on things which is so detailed it's frightening. For example, the 13th green's level was set six inches higher so you couldn't see anyone on the fairway behind it but you still had the views to the Kessock Bridge. To almost get inside Mark's head and shape the things he wants has been fantastic."

Castle Stuart Golf Links is set to open in 2009.

Mark Alexander is a freelance journalist and photographer

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FEATURE



Whats your Number?

Name: Alex Edward

Company: Inturf

Position: Joint Managing Director

How long have been in the industry?
"19 years."

How did you get into it?
"It's a family business so getting in was easy – the hard bit has been the subsequent 19 years!"

What other jobs have you done?
"I've worked hands-on laying turf throughout the UK and France. I like to think that means I know the job from every angle."

What do you like about your current job?
"It's different and interesting compared to most jobs, I like the people I meet and the space that 600 hectares under production provides."

What changes have you seen during your time in the industry?
"Mechanisation has drastically changed the way we operate with the



development in the early nineties of big roll installation and now automatic turf harvesters, and other wide area machines using GPS."

What do you like to do in your spare time?
"I am a keen road cyclist and mountain biker, I also run the odd half marathon."

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?
"Same place with bigger, better equipment and lighter, stiffer bikes!"

Who do you consider to be your best friends in the industry?
"My business partner and brother, Stephen, and one or two very close associates who work with us."

What do you consider to be your lucky number?
"Don't have one."

Pick a number
"73."

Alex has picked Peter Lloyd from Korec to be interviewed next month

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GUIDANCE ON REDUNDANCY PROCEDURE

Due to the current economic climate, many employers are seeking assistance on the procedure for redundancy. Redundancy can be a difficult and complex matter and as such we would advise that competent advice be sought from an H R & Employment Law Advisor, as redundancy should only be considered when there is a 'true redundancy' situation as detailed below: A closure or intended closure of the business; A closure or intended closure of the area of the business where the employee works; A reduction or expected reduction in the need for the kind of work carried out by the employee; A reduction in the number of employees required to carry out the particular kind of work.

Initial Briefing Process: There must be meaningful consultation in the form of initial briefing with all employees affected prior to a decision being made.

A written statement should be prepared and employees issued with this at the end of the initial briefing meeting. It is also useful to put some anticipated questions on the back of the briefing sheet that employees are likely to be concerned about.

Initial Individual Consultation: Having embarked on this you then need to carry out individual consultation with the affected employees and this should last for a period of two weeks minimum.

During the initial individual consultation, it may be necessary to discuss again why the redundancies are necessary, as although the word redundancy is commonplace within the environment, when employees are faced with this, the likelihood of them taking everything in at the initial consultation meetings may be remote, as what employers have to remember is that their first thoughts are likely to be home, family and financial commitments.

Selection Pool: Where possible you should look at a pool for selection and from there identify positions for potential redundancy. You then need to identify the grounds upon which you will select for redundancy. There are occasions when employers use 'last in first out' as a method on its own, but many employers are reluctant to go down this route.

Selection Matrix: Employers looking at a selection matrix should do so ensuring that within it, are a number of characteristics – flexibility, length of service, performance, transferable skills, absence, sickness and disciplinary record can all be included within the matrix, as all of these are 'objective criteria' which can be measured.

From there you need to determine how points will be scored. For example, an employee with one year's service could score 1 point, 2 years, 2 points and so on. With sickness absence, you again look at the period of time you wish to measure this and an employee with no absences could score 5 points, 1 – 3 absences 4 points, 4 – 6 absences, 3 points. The more the absence, the fewer the points – someone with something like 12 absences would score no points. The same could apply to the disciplinary record – someone with no disciplinary warnings would score 5 points.

Further Consultation: When the definitive pool for selection has been made and you are aware of who individuals are, the employee should be brought back and informed of his/her redundancy. At this stage they should be shown the selection matrix and given an explanation as to how you arrived at their score.

Appeal: Employees should always be advised they have the Right of Appeal against selection for redundancy, to whom this should be made and within what timescale.

Representation: At every step of the way, employees are entitled to be accompanied by either an elected workplace representative of their own choice, or an accredited trade union representative.

THE RYDER CUP CHALLENGE

By Josh Webber



FEATURE



As an English turfgrass student, moving to the United States was no small step. On arrival at Valhalla Golf Club in June 2007, as part of the Ohio State Internship Programme, I quickly realised that accomplishing Valhalla's goals in preparation for this tournament was no small feat. In fact, the overall goal appeared as somewhat of an insurmountable quest. "This is for me," I thought. The sleeves had to be rolled up!

As I write, the countdown reads 59 days until the start of the 37th Ryder Cup. As the world's largest golf tournament draws closer, Valhalla starts to emerge in the spotlight as this year's host. Although this is no surprise, as the event is estimated to attract the attention of 600 million viewers in 177 countries and territories.

With 250 members, Valhalla is normally only accustomed to 18,000-20,000 rounds a year; however, this year it will become home to 45,000 people during tournament week alone. One million square feet (22 acres) of tents will be installed for merchandise, chalets and concession stands. Alongside this, 250 corporations will entertain guests with five star private tents.

The economic impact of the tournament for the city of Louisville is estimated to bring in \$115 million! As a result, the PGA of America this year will partner with a number of different individuals and organisations to contribute \$500,000 to local charities in the Kentucky and Southern Indiana area.

Jack Nicklaus set out with a signature design to create the first championship golf facility for the area. Home to 486 rolling acres, Valhalla is

20 miles east of downtown Louisville, Kentucky. Valhalla provides a links-style front nine with a more traditional, parkland-style back nine.

As far as growing grass in the transition zone, anything goes. For example, if you walk the fairways of eight local courses, you will find an equal use of the following grasses: Bentgrass, Ryegrass, Bermuda and Zoysia. Managing Bentgrass fairways here is basically a modified greens programme: applying 5lbs of nitrogen to greens and 2.5lbs of nitrogen to tees and fairways, applied as an autumn application annually. Spoon feeding is implemented as a liquid for the remainder of the year, as needed.

A-1/A-4 Bentgrass is used on greens and Pennway on fairways and tees. The use of Kentucky Bluegrass and Perennial Ryegrass in the semi-rough help provide a great contrast with the Zoysia produced around bunker faces, also a mix of Fine Fescues in the native long rough areas help maintain good overall definition.

Without a doubt, the weather that Valhalla is exposed to each year is the single most controlling factor, as every step of the management plan is governed by Mother Nature. So as not to be dictated by the weather, lightweight equipment is utilised in a variety of ways. Triplex greens mowers are used on fairways, both 36 inch and 61 inch rotary mowers are used for rough areas, while greens, approaches and tees are all hand cut.

When I stepped off the plane last June, it was smack bang in the middle of a drought. Temperatures were in the high 90s and a million gallons of water were being pushed out each night. You could say this had me shocked! However, after I had endured multiple sunburns and completed an

impressive rain dance, I faced devastation as total flood prevailed this spring. Great times! It was at this point I began to grasp a better understanding for the unpredictable weather here.

Desert versus jungle would be the best way to describe the harsh environment, as the temperature and humidity fluctuate so much. Pop up rainstorms and adverse winds can also prove challenging. This is where the problems really start. Combining so many different types of weather within a certain day can become very problematic, as each one has so many variables. This in turn requires a day-to-day management style, which is frustrating at times with goals to achieve. If we could control the weather, we would go through the tournament relatively worry-free.

In this climate, disease pressure is huge. For example, there can be multiple days where Pythium, Dollar spot and Brown patch could all be active on the same turf. Although many of the diseases found here are somewhat culturally controlled, a preventative fungicide programme is in place every year to ensure good plant health. Very few clubs can deal with the cost of managing Bentgrass in this climate simply because of this relentless disease pressure. The main tactic here, to help keep disease at bay, is ensuring that you have good control over your water and nutrient applications. Trying to be a bit shy on both as it is much easier to add than is to subtract.

Major renovations have been underway for the last three years in preparation for the tournament this year. The crew had the mentality of training for marathon rather than a sprint. Along the way, there have been some interesting developments. 7,560 yards will be the outcome if the course is

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