

What price municipal green fee golf?

MANY of us are fully aware of the Government's intentions regarding compulsory competitive tendering for golf courses, but a lot of the public course clubs do not realise they have to protect themselves and their members.

This they can do by insisting with their local authority that they have the right to see and to read the specification that has been drawn up by the local authority, who have to list "how things are to be done and when they are done" the club's must use their right to insist that their rights are protected by ensuring the local authority put into their spec's i.e. clubs booking arrangements, captains days, charity days and any tee times that have been allocated to them, failure to see that the points mentioned are in spec could mean that whoever has



Panshanger Golf Club - winning the fight to be competitive.

"We are trying to get a message over before we witness the downfall of municipal clubs as we know them."

the right to take over the course does not have to honour any of these arrangements as they will only work to the spec; laid down at the time of the tender, whereas if the club get these included they have some protection.

In this feature Greenkeeping Management is attempting to get this message over before we have to witness the downfall of municipal clubs as we know them.

Demands are already being made on the clubs that have failed to find out these facts and are now tied down with red tape. The National Association of Public Golf Courses is at the forefront of the fight and it is with their help that Greenkeeping Management is presenting this feature.

Mike McClennan
Editor

WITH the explosion of interest in golf in this country in the past five years – due mainly to the media exposure and success by British players in international events such as the Ryder Cup and American Masters – one has to question what the future is for municipal golf courses.

I have to say the future of municipal golf looks fairly bleak, as the new capital and financial controls on local government spending will make it extremely difficult for authorities to finance new leisure projects, in particular municipal golf courses, in the future.

In addition recent legislation introduced by the government, such as compulsory competitive tendering, and even the effects of the poll tax, will have, I believe, a detrimental effect on courses in this country.

It is already widely recognised that we require up to 700 new courses in this country by the year 2000, to cope with the present demand from new players, and one only has to go to your local municipal course at any time of day to see what demand there is.

At Panshanger Golf Complex, which is run by Welwyn Hatfield Council, we get players leaving the public house, which is situated in the middle of the Golf Course, at 11.00 p.m. on a Saturday night and waiting in their cars until the shop opens at 6.00 a.m. the following day, to try and secure a round for that day.

This surely cannot be tolerated as in any other sport it would be unthinkable.

Some Municipals, especially in the South, are reporting over 70,000 rounds per year which by any Greenkeepers standard is 20,000 rounds too many, as the wear and tear on the course becomes very difficult to control.

In fact the STRI recommend that 45,000 rounds per year is the most economical level to maintain a Golf Course. However, in saying this there is a need to improve a lot of the existing Municipal Courses in this country, and to bring them up to the standards that the public expect as media exposure is showing courses at the highest quality, and the golfer expects this to be the standard on his own course.

Having travelled round the country and visited many

Municipal Courses there is a considerable variance in standard, and it is apparent to me that some Local Authorities do not see the benefit, whether it be financial or prestige, in providing a Course of the highest quality. We at Welwyn Hatfield believe in providing quality and the investment in Panshanger has paid off, with many members of the public unaware that it is a Local Government provision.

At Panshanger, which is situated in the green belt on 110 acres we provide a thriving 18 hole Golf Course, Public House, Function Suite, 3 Glass Backed Squash Courts, Pro Shop and other associated areas, and I would suggest to many people that our model is one that can easily be developed should the Local Authority be prepared to invest. The Course, and all the associated facilities, now cover its costs including all its debt charges, and still is able to make a contribution back into the Rates or what is now called the Poll Tax Fund.

I believe that Local Authorities should have the courage to invest more into

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their courses, for if they do not then the Private Sector will take these over in due course with the result of Compulsory Competitive Tendering.

At the moment under the new legislation it is compulsory for all Local Authorities to expose leisure management, bars and catering and grounds maintenance to tender, and the dangers here are the

Private Sector will possibly take control of the grounds maintenance of some courses. I hear some Authorities saying that they welcome this but, as we all know, the maintenance of a Golf Course is not only a job but a hobby as well to dedicated Greenkeepers, and when Golf Course maintenance becomes a commercial issue then there is the danger that the specification

could suffer and investments which have been made in the Course over the past years could go overnight.

Having said this, there are a lot of Municipal Courses which will benefit from CCT especially those where maintenance in the past has been sadly lacking and it is these courses, I believe, that the Private Sector will be trying to win.

Having given my broad

views on the future of Municipal Golf, and to the future, I would welcome any comments from readers as to their views as I have only touched on some of the nerve ends which need debating and would welcome greater debate through this magazine.

PETER KIRKHAM
Assistant Director of
Recreation, Welwyn
Hatfield Council

THERE are three areas of legislation which may affect Municipal Golf Clubs. Managing sports and leisure activities, grounds maintenance and catering.

The local authority has discretion over letting these functions as a separate contract or including them all in the sports and leisure contract.

Some authorities will consider letting the management of golf courses (including any combination of the three functions) as a separate contract or including it in a much larger contract covering other activities e.g. sports centres, swimming pools etc.

Different authorities will take different approaches.

The Contract Process

Local authorities may only carry out work contained within the Act if the following conditions have been met.

(a) The authority must publish a notice, before carrying out any of the work contained within the Act, in at least one local newspaper and one trade journal containing a brief description of the work, details for inspecting or purchasing the specification and a statement that the authority intends to make an invitation to carry out the work.

(b) The periods, place, time and charge specified in the notice are reasonable and the authority has made a detailed specification of work available before carrying the work and that the specification includes a statement of the contract period.

(c) There must be at least three bids invited from the private sector if sufficient interest is shown.

(d) If the local authority wishes to carry out the work itself, a written tender must also be submitted.

(e) The authority must not act in a manner which is anti-competitive.

(f) In carrying out the work, the authority must comply with the specification of work it has produced.

Legislation areas to be watched

The Specification

The specification is a very detailed document giving information and setting standards on every aspect of the service provided. If the specification is perfect and the contractor adheres to it, the customer using the service should not be able to detect any difference in the service, whoever is carrying out the work.

The specification for managing sports and leisure facilities might cover the following areas:

Description of area, description of service, changes in policy, improvements/expansion of the service, pricing, monitoring of performance, financial records, management information, sponsorship, purchasing, stationery, management, staffing levels, staffing qualifications/validity and experience, standards of dress/uniform, training, opening hours, programming, booking system, marketing, advertising, security, upkeep of facilities.

Action for Clubs

This note is not necessarily exhaustive, but is intended to act as a reminder, or checklist, of issues which clubs based on municipal golf courses should discuss with their local authority. Remember, if anything is not included in the specification, the person or company who wins the contract is under no obligation to provide it.

Because of the financial objectives which have to be met, anything outside of the specification will be the subject of a variation order which could be expensive

(a) Seek an early meeting with officers of your council's Leisure Services or Recreation Department to discuss the club's position in relation to competitive tendering and, in particular, the specification.

(b) Find out how the local authority intends to package the contracts and what the timescale for going out to tender will be.

(c) It is likely that the local authority will be taking the opportunity to review its policy and operation. Find out if this is the case, what is under review, how it will affect the club and how you can help in that process.

(d) Is the local authority view on charging likely to remain the same? What about season tickets? Any price concessions for club members? What about other charges - lockers, hire of equipment etc? Are juniors protected?

(e) Has the club any arrangement to book the first tee for competitions? If so, are the arrangements included in the specification? Is there a difference between regular arrangements (e.g. twice a month for competitions) and special occasions (e.g. Cap-

tain's Day)? Are they also protected?

(f) What are the booking arrangements? Will they remain the same? How much notice will be given for regular bookings and special occasions?

(g) Is there a formal route for consultation between the club and the local authority. If not, use this opportunity to establish one. Don't appear to be in the position of always asking for something. Your expertise may help the local authority in preparing a specification or monitoring the contractor's performance.

(h) Are there rules about priority on the first tee? More than one starting point? Competitions having priority etc? Often these rules are not written down, but in future they may need to be.

(i) What arrangements does the club have for visiting players or teams in competitions (concessions, priority bookings etc.)? Make sure that they are protected in the specification.

(j) Have NAPGC competitions been considered? If there are existing arrangements, are they included in the specification? What about future possibilities - hosting the NAPGC Open?

(k) Does the club have any arrangements for catering (for visiting teams, for example)? Are the arrangements protected?

(l) Does the club have any arrangement for use of any part of the clubhouse either permanently or for special occasions? Office space, storage space or use for social events are examples. Make sure that your use is protected in the specification.

In this article we examine the myriad of ways in which Government legislation could affect the running of municipal golf courses. Thanks for the information goes to the National Association of Public Golf Courses.

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FOCUS ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES

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(m) Does the club have any notice-boards, trophy cabinets, honours boards, displays of photographs etc? Is the right to continue them protected?

(n) Is there any relationship between the club and the Professional? Find out whether the Professional's terms are to be altered and how they will be considered under a contract. Will the Professional be contracted to the council outside the management contract or will it be left to the discretion of the Contractor?

(o) Are the proposed course opening hours any different? Who will decide whether the course is fit for play?

(p) Does the club have the right to have fund-raising events (prize draws etc)? Is that right protected?

(q) Do the council's staff at the Golf club carry out any administrative functions for the club? Can they be detailed and included in the specification?

(r) What are the insurance responsibilities of the club and the council? Will they be affected?

(s) What are the council's rules about sponsorship and will they be written into the specification? How does this affect sponsorship for club competitions?

(t) Finally, has the club considered submitting a tender? Discuss the possibility with the local authority.

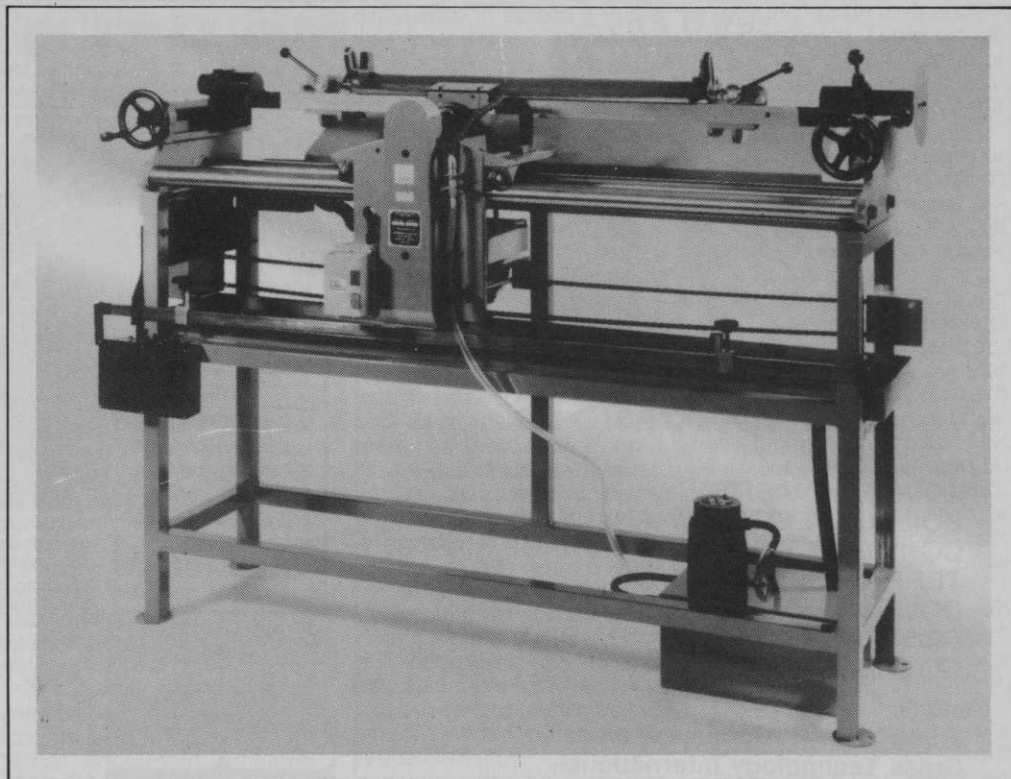
There are bound to be other issues to be considered because every arrangement is different at the moment. Perhaps you could use these notes as a basis for a brainstorming session at your own club Committee meeting and other ideas may crop up.

HAULER (EUROPE) LTD

THE U.K. manufactured Hauler AT500 is an economical load carrying all terrain vehicle that is easy to manoeuvre in tight spaces.

The high flotation tyres minimise compaction, enabling many tasks to be carried out without damage to the land. The AT500 can take a range of turf-care equipment and trailers, in addition to being capable of moving a wide range of boats or caravans around suitable sites.

Both 18 horsepower petrol and 15 horsepower diesel engined versions are available. The range of options include a cab, full lighting kit, and hydraulic tipping. Mesh cages suitable for transporting stock or leaf and litter collection can also be supplied.



The Atterton Anglemaster

ATTERTON & Ellis offers a range of machines to sharpen all sizes of cylinders and bottom blades.

The "Master" cylinder grinding machine is designed for sharpening large quantities of heavy duty cylinders and is suitable for machines having up to 106cm (42in) cutting width.

The company's "Express Dual" cylinder grinding machine is capable of both "in-situ" or plain cylinder grinding on a wide range of lawnmowers. When used "in-situ", the complete mower is located centrally on the machine and locked into place, the grinding cycle taking place without the usual 'strip-down' of the mower. Separate cylinder grinding may also be undertaken when the busy periods are over and the mower requires a 'full' service. Bottom blades have to be removed for separate grinding.

A "Public Authority" version of the Express Dual is available featuring a heavy duty mains electric motor.

A "Professional" kit to enable "in-situ" sharpening of a wider range of cutting units is also available at extra cost.

The "Pilot" plain cylinder grinding machine is produced to meet the needs of the smaller workshop - say 5 to 10 medium sized mowers and incorporates the essential features of the other machines, but without the high capital outlay.

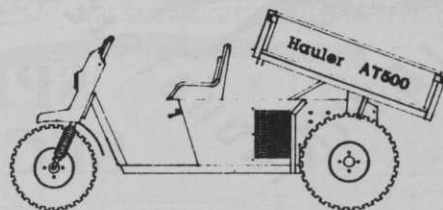
Arranged for bench fixing, the "Pilot" features the "Easitru" system of setting up

which combines accuracy with simple mounting.

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GRASS TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL

GRASS TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL of Stirling, Scotland and Roscommon, Ireland is a new Consulting Company founded to meet the agronomic demands for new Golf Course development and offer expert

advice in management of established courses throughout Britain, Ireland and Europe.

The Principals of GTI are John Souter and Eddie Connaughton and the combining last year of the former's 20 year experience in construction and drainage and the latter's 10 years greenkeeping

BALDWIN INDUSTRIES

HIGH BALLS, low balls, hooked shots, sliced shots, the grass covered with oversize buttercups and mushrooms.

These innocent one piece golf balls represent on the one hand a potential safety hazard and on the other an investment of nine to twelve thousand pounds.

Baldwin Industries with their specialist fencing contracting companies based in Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, have looked closely at the problem of golf ball containment on driving ranges and with the use of computer aided design, contracts at four purpose built sites have been completed in the last 18 months.

The ranges being Oxten Golf Club near Nottingham, Keele Golf Centre, Ashton under Lyne, Elstree Golf Centre, North London and Wavendon Golf Centre, Milton Keynes. Steel supports to 6 metres high clad with a combination of chainlink and high strength polyethylene mesh help to deflect the more powerful low shot and the weaker high shot.

The fencing must not only contain the golf balls but be able to stand in all weathers, which we have successfully proved, and be able to be easily repaired by the range staff should the netting become worn.

Baldwin Industries are examining and testing new cladding materials and support systems from the Continent which may be more economical and aesthetically pleasing to future range developers.

Security fencing and gates to machinery and chemical storage areas, timber screen fencing to gas tanks and bin areas, turnstiles for access, vehicle barriers, temporary fencing at tournaments are all part of the fencing requirements that can be provided by Baldwin Industries. A phone call to arrange a site survey and estimate is all it takes to experience a personal and knowledgeable service.

MARSTON AGRICULTURAL SERVICES LIMITED

MARSTON Agricultural Services (A.S. Trailers) have been producing trailers for the farming fraternity for over 40 years and, with the advent of the compact tractor, have designed a range of tipping trailers from 1.0 ton to 2.5 tonnes to meet this expanding market.

These trailers have an all steel body with rear opening tailgate and dropsides. Optional equipment includes mesh extension kits and wide/low pressure tyres, making them suitable for various applications in parks and gardens, golf courses or just general purpose use for transporting sand, gravel, soil or other materials.

They also produce a range of local authority trailers from 3½ ton GVW to 5 tonnes. These are high spec trailers specially designed to suit local authority applications with top/bottom opening tailgate, road lights, mudguards, sprung axle, hydraulic brakes, or on the 3½ GVW only, overrun braking system. For special local authority applications a three way tipping version of the 3½ GVW is available.

A specialist range of dump trailers from 5 tonnes to 12 tonnes is also manufactured, these have a heavy duty body suitable for handling gravel, stone and rubble. Their specification includes road lighting equipment and hydraulic cam brakes.

Various other specialist trailers have been designed to meet specific requirements from three way tipper to balanced trailers with turntable.

Thank you for reading this feature, watch out for further top quality features in next month's issue of Greenkeeping Management, Europe's top 'greenkeeping magazine'.

experience in Ireland and the USA coupled with a Bachelor of Science degree in Turf Management provided an excellent base to offer a complete service to the expanding and established golf market.

The services offered by GTI range from full site feasibility studies to determine if a site is suitable for a Golf Course development or simply a soil/sand analysis to determine quality and consistency. The company is very involved in offering advisory visits to established courses to update and refine management programmes to achieve desired course conditions. These on site services are backed up by a comprehensive laboratory for all soil/sand analysis.

The need for proper specifications in today's expanding market is never more apparent. With the demands on golf courses for year-round play and super-fast greens the need to built correctly the first time is essential. With our comprehensive drawing office and computer aided surveying and design it is possible to draw up exact specifications to architect's drawings which can then be quoted for on a fair basis.

The specifications, once used, are monitored during con-

struction through to opening - with materials approved all along the way. The client is, at all times, made aware of progress with regular site meetings taking place.

With the reputation of our company expanding in a short period of time we were approached by the architect in charge of the new golf course at Euro Disney in Paris.

The Ronald Fream Design Group realised the limitations of the clay site in Paris and approached GTI to carry out a full contour survey and prepare a drainage plan with specifications for the 150 acre site. This site will be monitored by GTI from start to finish and, thereafter the maintenance for the growing-in period with continual advisory visits once opened for play.

From this initial contact with Ronald Fream we now have designs on the boards in the London area, in Perthshire, Scotland and in Portugal.

The ability to carry out a site feasibility study, design the golf course, make-up construction and drainage specifications, supervise construction and advise on aftercare maintenance gives GTI the most comprehensive in-house service available to golf courses be they 'new or old'.

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