

**RICHMOND (YORKS) GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

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**Approved by the Board of Directors**

**RGC**

**Version 3.0**

**April 2023**

**1. Preface**

England Golf state that the Golf Course should be the main focus of any Club’s strategic planning, so the purpose of this document is to establish a clear and consistent policy for the management of the course at Richmond (Yorks) Golf Club (RGC). This will fulfil the potential of the course for the benefit of members, their guests and visitors. It has been approved by the Board of Directors (BoD) and is held in the Office and posted on the Club’s website. This document will be reviewed and amended as necessary, subject to approval by the BoD.

**2. Introduction**

The Club was founded in 1892 and has been played at its current site, Bend Hagg, since 1904 after members decamped from the old racecourse half a mile away. The current RGC extends over 115 acres (46.5 hectares) of land, predominately comprised of an area of chalk downland, generally formed on a clay loam overlaying flint and chalk layers. Drainage is not normally an issue, although occasional clay pockets, or compaction following construction works may cause localised temporary standing water. The Course uses approximately 100 acres for fairways and greens with and the balance of approximately 15 acres used for practice facilities. The practice facilities comprise a putting green, chipping greens, practice bunkers, a driving range and an academy course. Due to the age of the club, the greens were constructed at various times and there are currently three distinct greens constructions:

• Greens constructed to USGA guidelines;
• Old push up greens, constructed on a clay base to preserve water;
• Greens constructed over a stone carpet not conforming to USGA guidelines.

Consequently, the greens can show some variability, particularly in adverse conditions, but with good husbandry consistency is maintained in terms of speed, trueness and smoothness.

The grass species composition on greens is targeted to be 50% brown-top bent and 50% annual meadow-grass (poa). Fairways are of variable composition including poa and rye species. The weather patterns at RGC provide an annual average of 44.4 inches (1128mm) of rain with below average frost. Snow is a rare occurrence. In recent years Spring have been dry with consistent easterlies, resulting in the slow pick up of growth to greens.

**3. Objectives**

**Our objectives are:**

1. To maintain high standards of course presentation throughout the year and to ensure that the experience is challenging yet fair for all categories of existing member and visitors.

2. To create the best layout of the course by the use of a long-term development plan using selected ideas from external architectural consultants, in order to optimise the course for existing members and to attract new members.

3. To be one of the best maintained courses in the area.

**These objectives will be achieved by:**

• Employing modern technology and machinery to increase efficiency and productivity;
• Developing, training and motivating staff at all levels;
• Optimizing spending within budget constraints;
• Maintaining a 10-year strategic plan with short term deliverable objectives;
• Maximising the playability of the course by optimising tee, green and bunker positioning;
• Creating greens which are consistent, true and smooth;
• Having bunkers which are challenging and fair;
• Establishing fairways which are well defined and reward good shots;
• Continuing the programme of tree management with regards to safety, health of tees and greens, playability, ease of maintenance and speed of play;
• Allowing rough which promotes the indigenous flora and fauna while helping to define the topography of the course.

**4. The Board of Directors and the Greens Committee**

The Bod at RGC is responsible for all strategic and operational matters at the Golf Club, with the current organisation diagram available through the website. The Infrastructure Director will be the main point of contact with the Green Keepers. The BoD will appoint a Greens Committee to act as the liaison group with the Green Keepers to help with course management.

**5. The Head Greenkeeper**

The Head Greenkeeper will meet with the Infrastructure Director and the Greens Committee on a regular basis to perform the following duties :-
• Provide regular reports for the BoD.
• Manage the budget approved by the BoD, proposing new capital and revenue expenditure for approval.
• Produce Meeting Agenda and record Minutes.
• Provide regular reports to members via social media, the Club Website and notice boards.
• Carry out performance management of staff including appraisals and training needs.

* Manage all aspects of Health & Safety on the Course as per the RGC Health & Safety Policy.

• Making the decision on opening and closure of the course.
• The decision on a daily basis for buggy use on the course.
• Agree the timing of intensive work on the course such as greens maintenance, considering upcoming events/fixtures etc.
• Informing the members of impending works on the golf course, which may disrupt play.
• Maintaining appropriate levels of materials suitable for repair and maintenance of the golf course. This includes sourcing and safe and secure storage, and recycling materials.

**6. Resources**

The agreed full time staffing level is currently as follows:

• Head Greenkeeper- Rob Spaven
• Deputy Head Greenkeeper – Iain Leversuch
• Assistant Greenkeeper – James Bell
• Trainee/Apprentice Greenkeeper – Finn Kelly

 RGC is committed to sustaining the optimum staffing level as finances allow and to provide the necessary training and education to retain a structured staffing profile and to enable staff to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

RGC is committed to offering a competitive salary structure. The club will pay professional subscriptions and training fees for all full-time staff.

The Staff are required to wear the protective clothing and safety equipment provided by the Club, to follow specified work procedures and Health and Safety procedures. A good standard of accommodation will be provided for the staff in accordance with health and safety requirements. Adequate secure facilities will be provided for machinery and materials.

**7. Members, their guests and visitors**

It is the responsibility of all Members, their Guests and Visitors at RGC to take every possible care of the course. This will include repairing all damage they impose on the playing surfaces, e.g. pitch mark repair, divot replacement, the raking of bunkers after play, the correct replacement of rakes, obeying instructions regarding traffic management and accepting all decisions made regarding course usage.

The Greens staff will be vigilant so as not to delay play unreasonably. Where possible or feasible, they will endeavour to give way to players. However, Greens staff have priority on the course at all times preceding key club events (eg club championships, pro-am, county tournaments etc) during Course Maintenance weeks of which there will be two per annum. There is a responsibility on the part of players to ensure greens staff are aware of their presence before a shot where there is any risk they may be endangered.

The Head Greenkeeper will liaise with the BoD to provide reasonable notice of any exceptional major work (eg verti-draining and top dressing) that has not already been scheduled in the club diary.

**Specific Safety Rules for Players**

**Footpaths**

There are a few public footpaths that cross the golf course and are marked by signs on the signposts on the course.

All golfers must obey any erected signage and be always aware of members of public on the course. There are on the 3rd, 6th 9th 13th 16th holes; please check that walkers are not using the footpaths non-golfers may be on the golf course and so golfers must give way to walkers to avoid confrontation and any potentially dangerous situations. Signal to walkers to cross and allow them time to clear the area before playing.

**Key areas include: -**

3rd Hole – the footpath runs and main drive runs in front of the 3rd fairway. This is clearly visible from the tee.

13th Hole – the footpath runs across the fairway towards the 9th green at the end of the lefthand side copse of trees. Walkers can be difficult to spot when entering the course from the left-hand field.

**Bells**

To speed up play and as a safety measure, bells are provided on the 8th and 13th fairways and should be rung when members have passed them.

**First Aid**

In the event of injury First Aid kits are located in the in the Club House, the Office and at the Green Keepers complex. A defibrillator and Accident Book are also held in the Office.

**8. Course Management Policy**

 **8.1 Greens**

The underlying objectives of putting surface management are to:

• Produce a good level of usability year-round, barring frost and snow;
• Creating true and smooth greens with summer stimp meter speeds of between 9.0 and 10.0 feet;
• Promote a good level of consistency between putting greens on a daily basis.
• Holes are changed twice a week in the summer months and once a week in the winter months.

The above will be achieved by promoting firm and dry surfaces. Where design, drainage, size, shape or situation limits maintenance solutions, then re-construction will be considered. Throughout the growing season, in addition to the course maintenance, a regular programme of aeration and dressing will be undertaken.

 Greens will be mown through the growing season at a height of 3/4mm. This will be raised to a height of 5/6mm over winter, mowing often enough to retain a uniform, neat surface. The HG may change the height of cut, depending on the prevailing weather conditions and time of year.

Verti-cutting, top dressing and aeration programmes will be formulated to maintain thatch levels in the soil profile and prevent compaction on the surface.

A Fertiliser program will be formulated at the start of the year after nutrient levels have been tested. This will be monitored throughout the year and adapted depending on weather conditions.

Diseases management and pest control will follow best practice both in preventative and curative sense.

Irrigation will be applied where necessary to maintain soil moisture levels at 16% to 26%. This will help maintain a healthy sward and reduce unwanted stress.

Greens maintenance will be scheduled to minimise disruption to play where possible and to maximise the benefit from each operation.

**8.2 Green surrounds**

The green surround shall be maintained to provide a smooth, well presented transition from fairway to putting green. This will include a close-cut fringe, collar and apron. The collar and immediate surround will be managed, except for cutting, in as similar a manner to greens as is feasible.

The apron and green surround will be mown at 8-10mm in the growing season and 10-12mm in the winter, to maintain good sward density, health and retain tidy presentation, without promoting scalping, drought or wear stress.

Weed and pest control measures to be taken as necessary.

**8.3 Fairways**

The fairway is defined as the land lying between the carry from the tee and the green apron. Fairways shall be mown to present an attractive appearance, producing an informal margin, which complements both natural and manmade features.

Fairways will be cut at 14-20mm depending on the time of year and prevailing weather conditions. A 3-6-month slow release fertiliser will be applied in the spring with monthly growth regulators and fertilisers applied as needed throughout the year. They will be cut in accordance to growth rates and presentation required.

Aeration and dressing will be carried out as necessary to promote good sward health and firm and dry playing surfaces throughout, concentrating on main traffic areas in the late summer and autumn.

Weed and pest control measures will be taken as necessary.

The carry to the fairway will be at a maximum of 100m from the red tee.

**8.4 Rough**

The semi-rough will be mown regularly with the mower set at a cut height of between 50-100mm to provide a nominal penalty to the wayward shot. The deeper rough shall be managed to retain and encourage the native vegetation.

Weed and pest control measures will be taken as necessary.

**8.5 Tees**

Tee maintenance shall provide for a firm, level stance with a uniform, dense grass cover from which a clean contact with the ball can be made. Areas around the tees will be maintained at an appropriate height to offer a contrast.

Tee Markers are moved on a daily basis.

Tees will be maintained as for green surrounds. In addition, divot repairs will be completed on a weekly basis to those tees taking heavy damage, (i.e. the par 3 holes) and every other week for the remainder. Tee irrigation will be maintained to facilitate divot regeneration.

Weed and pest control measures will be taken as necessary.

Tee mats or separate winter tees may be adopted to preserve the grassed tees during the winter or during construction work.

**8.6 Bunkers**

Bunkers will be maintained to provide hazards. They will be designed to drain freely, be visible and provide a positive influence on play. The sand used will be to a specification and laid to a depth to provide for a consistent playing surface.

The bunkers are normally to be raked on a daily basis during the season and sand will be topped up as necessary. Bunker depth 3/4 inch

The bunker and its boundary are to be trimmed as necessary to retain a clear definition to the hazard.

Where bunkers do not meet these criteria then they will be up-graded, but in such a way as to conform to the style of the 10-year plan for the course.

Rakes should be replaced in bunkers with the head towards the front.

**8.7 Trees and Tree Safety**

A key task of the course management is to establish a regular programme of tree husbandry both from a point of the health of the course but more importantly from a safety aspect for all those working on and using the golf course. From a safety aspect it is vital that any trees presenting a significant safety risk should be dealt with (either by surgery or complete removal) in the shortest possible time scales. From a perspective of general course health, copses should be managed to prevent them becoming too dense by removal of weaker trees, and trees around tees and greens should be managed to ensure appropriate light and nutrients are reaching the course. Broadly, the objectives are to:

• ensure there are no significant injury risks presented by dead or diseased trees;
• ensure good sight lines from a safety point of view;
• maximize light and air circulation on the tees and greens;
• thin out areas to speed up play, without affecting the hazard levels on the course;
• control self-seeded saplings; accentuate some of the excellent specimen trees that we have on the course.

In order to satisfy the safety aspect of tree management, the Golf Club will engage the services of an independent arborist on a regular basis. The arborist will perform an inspection and will provide a report, clearly identifying trees which are currently, or may soon become a risk to safety, along with any other relevant recommendations.

The Head Greenkeeper will be responsible for the day to day management of trees and may engage external tree surgery specialists as appropriate. Management of significant trees, and those of architectural importance to the course will be performed by the Head Greenkeeper with agreement from BoD except where there is a significant safety risk and undue delay would present a high risk of injury.

**8.8 Machinery**

A full inventory of course maintenance equipment will be maintained. A planned programme of replacement will be produced by the HG as an on-going measure, though there will be flexibility within this structure to delay or bring forward purchases as the need arises.

All machines will be maintained following the maintenance programmes in the appropriate manufacturer’s handbook. All machinery will be cleaned and lubricated, as necessary, after use. The main items of machinery will undergo routine servicing in house.

**8.9 Course Furniture**

The management, upkeep, maintenance and replacement of all golfing course furniture is the responsibility of the HG and BoD. Memorial items such as benches/plaques will be maintained up to the point of economic common sense. Such items may not be replaced as a matter of course when scrapped. Further memorial furniture will be subject to BoD approval.

**8.10 Agronomy**

The Golf club will provide for monitoring visits from time to time from an experienced professional, independent agronomist. The agronomist will advise on course maintenance and development issues, including any resource issues, which impinge on these. It is current policy to use advice from STRI (Sports Turf Research Institute).

**8.11 Objective measurement: putting green agronomic target ranges**

The key agronomic measurements to take are:

• Grass species composition
• Soil moisture content (% volumetric)
• Organic matter content at 0-20, 20-40,40-60 and 60-80 mm depths.

**9. Course development**

All development on the course is subject to being planned and implemented within the framework of the 10-year plan. However, it is intended that this document be reviewed periodically as circumstance change.

**10. Course Closure and Re-opening**

The state of the Course will be inspected by the Head Greenkeeper or Assistant Greenkeepers in his absence, prior to commencement of play each day and a decision reached on course opening. This decision will be taken with reference to weather conditions forecast for the day and following the procedures detailed in this Course Management Policy. In their absence from the Course, the call out rota for Greenkeepers will be used to seek guidance by the Shop Personnel or member of the Board. If the decision is made to close the course, this will be announced by Shop Personnel or Board Member on a buggy, using the air horn across the course to ensure total course closure at the following locations :-

* From the Car Park – North Side and South Side
* From the 14th Tee
* From the 6th Tee

All players must leave the Course immediately. Should weather conditions improve, play may restart on the instruction from the Greenkeepers. During out of office hours, in the absence of Greenkeepers or Shop Personnel, the decision to play rests with the individual and RGC has no responsibility if play takes place in inclement weather at such times. The status of the Course will be updated on the RGC website, both on the ‘banner headline’ and the Facebook page, by the Greenkeeper on duty or on call.

**11. Inclement Weather**

**11.1 Fog**When fog reduces visibility to less than 100 yards Closure of the Course will be necessary in the interests of the safety of players, Course Staff and persons using the public rights of way.

Note: If you can’t see the start of the 1st fairway from the back of the first tee then the course should be closed. Visibility can, however, vary considerably on different parts of the Course. A full Course inspection may be necessary in some circumstances to confirm the need to close or re-open the Course.

**11.2 Thunderstorms**Severe weather conditions including lightning will strike. Consequently, it is up to each individual to be responsible for their own safety whilst on the golf course and to make appropriate decisions including talking shelter in bad weather. Richmond Golf Club operate a klaxon warning system. If there is a risk of lightning play MUST be discontinued and the player seek appropriate shelter or return to the clubhouse until the threat has passed.

**11.3 Snow and Ice**Play is not possible when snow is lying on the Course and should not be permitted until all playing areas are clear.

Note: Turf on the Course, especially on the greens, is particularly susceptible to damage when frozen sub-soil is thawing. Play should never be allowed at these times, although the use of temporary greens can provide an alternate solution.

**11.4 Wind**In the case of high windsthe course may have to be closed. If there is a red weather warranting made by the met office this will automatability closed the course or gusted of wind over 50mph.
This brings risk of trees coming down.

**11.5 Heavy Rain/waterlogged**Flooding or waterlogging of areas of the Course, in particular the greens, during or following heavy periods of precipitation may make the Course unplayable and to allow golfers onto the Course in such conditions may cause damage to the turf and playing surfaces.

Note: A good indicator of the need to close the Course at such times is when surface water appears or is lying on the 9th green. A Course inspection would, however, usually be needed to confirm this.

**12. Local Rules**

Local Rules to cater for unusual conditions will be published as and when necessary. For example, preferred lies will be declared by the Head Greenkeeper in consultation with the Competition Secretaries.

**13. Complaint procedure**

Any complaints relating to the condition of the course or behaviour of employees must be made in writing to the BoD.

**14. Communication**

Every effort will be made to maintain a dialogue with members on issues relating to course management that will have a bearing on course condition. Members will be informed, via a periodic newsletter, notices, e-mail etc. of works likely to cause significant disruption to play.

Members will be encouraged to support the objectives of this document by making constructive suggestions, in writing, to the BoD.

On course notices will be used when relevant. Daily course information messages will be communicated to members about the playability and status of the course by means of the Club’s media pages. The messages will be left upon completion of a course inspection no later than 7.00am. The only exception to this is during the winter when the course inspections take place at first light, which may be later.

**15. Buggies**

Any person who operates a ride-on buggy on the golf course is deemed, by so doing, to have the knowledge, training and skill to safely operate this vehicle and be fully accountable for their actions and the consequences.

The safe operation of ride-on buggies on the course requires conscientious application and adherence to the minimum standard of care prescribed by this policy.

From time to time the Club staff may determine that the state of the course or the weather is such that safety on, or the condition of the course may be unacceptably compromised if a ride-on buggy is used.  This might apply to the whole or just part of the course. Potentially unsuitable conditions include waterlogged, frost, etc. Where such conditions arise, the club will review the situation on a daily basis.

Due to the fact that privately owned buggies have their own insurance cover in place it may be possible they continue to use their buggy. In these situations only single seater buggies will be allowed and a review of this policy may be made should ground conditions dictate a change.

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