

FRINTON LINKS - COURSE POLICY DOCUMENT

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out details of the Management of the Golf Course at Frinton Links, which will have been approved by the Course Manager, Greens Committee and Board of Directors.

The Policy Document is a 5-Year Plan, effective from 2024 — 2029 and is to be reviewed annually where necessary.

When finally approved, the policy will be strictly pursued, and any future proposed changes will not be introduced without consultation with the Board of Directors.

The Course — Brief History and Characteristics

Golf at Frinton is nearly as old as the town itself, Frinton Golf Club was founded in 1895 and used a nine-hole designed by Tom Dunn, on land now occupied by houses in Second and Third Avenue.

In 1904 twice-Open Champion Willie Park Jnr. designed a new 18-hole course on the present site. In 1910, on the advice of the famous golf course architect Harry S. Colt, various improvements were made to the original design, which left the layout largely as we know it today as the Havers Course. An additional 9 hole 'Short' Course, originally intended for beginners and children was added some years later.

The game of golf sets many different challenges, but the satisfaction that the golfer gains from pitting his skills and wits against the course Architect during a round of golf is second to none. Together, Willie Park Jnr. and Harry S. Colt have created a course layout that is admired by the golfing connoisseur as a fair and enjoyable test. Their creation has embraced the natural East Anglian landscape and has never in anyway offended its marshland heritage and appearance.

It is important to appreciate that with the terrain available to them, they produced an excellent golfing challenge. As custodians of their work, it is vital that the appointed officers of the club protect this creation by avoiding any major alterations or upgrades that would damage the principal design of our course.

At 6,249 yards, the Havers course is not excessively long by modern standards and, at first glance the absence of trees may indicate an easy test. But this is not the whole story. Fast, firm and undulating greens test the best putters, tidal ditches cross many fairways requiring careful placement of shots, plus there is usually the wind to consider. It is rare to play in still conditions at Frinton and its open character means that every shot must be evaluated with both wind strength and direction in mind. A 130-yard shot that requires a pitching wedge can often require a long iron played in the opposite direction.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Directors are responsible for the management of Frinton Links and all its aspects.

The Greens Committee is responsible for the detailed management of the Golf Course within the financial structure laid down by the Board of Directors, to include personnel, machinery and general management of staff in conjunction with the Course Manager.

The Course Manager attends and advises the Greens Committee as required.

The Manager/Secretary co-ordinates the Frinton Links Fixture List considering work on the course. He will communicate all alterations and changes to members and staff as appropriate.

The Course Manager is responsible for the implementation of this Policy and all its aspects to include:

Planning of maintenance schedules in relation to fixture lists.

Liaison \with Manager/Secretary on any problem areas.

Machinery maintenance schedules and records.

Personnel education, training and discipline.

Allocation of daily tasks in compliance with the Club's Health & Safety Policy.

Storage and safety of fertilisers and chemicals.

Ecology matters in compliance with the SSSI (Special Site of Scientific Interest) as agreed with English Nature and Environment Agency.

Resources

Staff The agreed staffing level includes the following:

Course Manager (1)

Deputy Course Manager (1)

Greenkeepers (3)

Apprentices (1)

Total 6

There is a commitment to training and education of green staff who are all encouraged to obtain City and Guilds Certificates in Greenkeeping to the maximum of their individual abilities. Apprentices are to be allowed time off to attend College on a day release basis. Staff are also encouraged to become members of BIGGA (British International Golf Greenkeeper Association) and to attend discussion groups organised by them.

Equipment/Course Machinery:

The Course Manager will make recommendations to the Greens Committee regarding machinery replacement which will be in line with the replacement programme and inventory,

Objectives

Frinton Links 5 Year Plan

The objective of the Greens Committee, Course Manager and his Staff is to present both courses in the best possible way, at any given time, given the constraints of weather, finance and other limitations set out in this policy document.

The Short Course is intended to be played by all golfers, including children and beginners, regardless of ability. As such, within the 'island' area encapsulating the 1st – 5th holes there will be no heavy rough. All grass will either be mown as fairway or light rough. On holes 6 – 9, except for areas that adjoin the Havers course, the same principle will prevail and there will be no heavy rough in front of any tee or green.

The Havers Course is to be presented as a test for all golfers other than complete beginners. Where it is deemed aesthetically pleasing, heavy rough will at times be sown, although it will not extend further than 80 yards from the red tees, 110 yards from the yellow tees or 120 yards from the white tees. The blue tees, which are only to be used in major club competitions, may have carries longer than this at the discretion of the Greens Committee.

The objectives will necessarily alter as year's progress. The objectives for 2024 (the year of this original document) until 2029 are that this golf course should improve to the standard that it is recognised as one of the best-maintained and enjoyable courses in East Anglia and it is the intention to permanently maintain this standard. It is not, and has no pretension to become a Championship Course, however, the course has been designed to accommodate a scratch golfer and this policy should be always adhered to.

It is to be maintained in excellent traditional condition for the enjoyment of Members of all handicaps and their guests. Visitors are most welcome provided they satisfy the Cub's criteria of membership of a recognised Golf Club or Golf Societies, with playing ability to a minimum standard laid down by the Committee.

Ecology and Statutory Limitations

Except for the 1st and 2nd holes on the Havers Course, the Course comes within an area designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and detailed in File reference 14 WTC, attached to this document in Appendix A. All greenkeeping operations on the course must therefore comply with the requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The issues regarding what are permissible operations under the Act are further described in document OLD1006349 attached in Appendix B.

The prime reason for the designation was the completeness of the brackish brook (Kirby Brook), typical of Thames Estuary grazing marshes, which were common in past times but are now rare. The site is therefore noted for its ditch flora and the invertebrate fauna it supports. An important consequence of the presence of the golf course is the availability of open areas to resident and migratory bird species.

In practice therefore, the principal areas of concern are the reeds alongside and within the ditches, which are theoretically are the responsibility of English Nature, but which we are now obliged to maintain and the thick areas of rough, which need to be maintained to protect ground nesting birds and mammals.

It is the responsibility of the Course Manager to liaise with English Nature regarding the implications of the greenkeeping strategy and ensure the requirements of the SSSI documentation are met.

Course Policy

In July 2024, Paul Woodham an Independent Agronomist who was at the time working on behalf of the STRI was commissioned to write a report on the current condition of the course and make recommendations for future maintenance and improvements. The report dated 24th July 2024 is attached in Appendix C.

In general, it is the recommendation of the Greens Committee that the policies outlined in that report are adopted.

Greenkeeping Practices

Cutting Heights

GREENS – 4.5mm Summer, 5 – 6.5mm Winter (weather dependant)

TEES/COLLARS/APRONS – 10mm Summer, 12mm Winter

FAIRWAYS – 16mm Summer, 16-20mm Winter (weather dependant)

SURROUNDS/SEMI ROUGH – 40mm

ROUGH – 60mm

LONG ROUGH – Mown/collected twice a year when weather conditions permit, rough is scarified to ensure a thinning out of the sward continues.

Greens

Sub Soil Structure: The aim should be to improve the quality of all greens sub soil structure; this will help improve sward quality and all year-round playing conditions.

The following practices are to be carried out on Greens:

Verti Draining: To be carried out twice a year in the Spring and Autumn, depth and timing will be dependent on weather conditions.

Hollow Tinning: To be carried out twice year in April and September, over seeding with fescue will also be carried out at these times.

Top Dressing: To be carried out as often as needed throughout the playing season. A little an often approach will be adopted, most likely fortnightly. Timing will be weather, resource and golfing calendar dependant.

Grasses: The policy is to reduce the level of annual meadow grass to encourage bents and fescue grasses.

Fertiliser application, a balanced approach will be taken to ensure good all year-round health of the sward.

Long Term Green Policy: Through a continued programme of aeration, and renovation create conditions for healthy bacterial activity and retain the level of thatch to an acceptable level and to encourage the deeper rooting species of grasses. (Fescue)

Approaches

Frinton Links 5 Year Plan

It is our intention to improve the quality of these areas by treating them like the greens; this will be done by increasing the maintenance that take place. Regular aeration, topdressing, over-seeding, fertilising and box cutting.

Tees

To ensure tees are of adequate size to cope with volume of play and are flat/level. A programme of improvements will be put in place to ensure this.

Competition Tees ('White Boxes') are used only for recognised Club Competitions and Matches, or by prior arrangement with the Manager/Secretary and the Course Manager. The 5th Pulpit Tee is used between Easter and September only for several silverware competitions or on special occasions as agreed by the Course Manager and the Manager/Secretary.

Rough and Semi Rough

The rough is to be allowed to grow to show the definition of the course in long rough and semi rough areas, considering some of these areas form part of the Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Where possible other areas should be identified to allow 'long rough' to be established which will enhance the course and provide additional natural habitat for birds and other wildlife. Long rough will be cut and collected twice annually, weather permitting, this operation will thin the sward at the base of the plant leading to a less penal rough long rough is to be reviewed annually.

Drainage and Ditches:

Drainage: Over the last few years, a substantial amount of work has been done to improve the drainage of the course, principally by constructing new drainage ditches, which has been relatively successful. The Greens Committee will continue to monitor the water levels and make recommendations for further improvements should they be necessary. The outfalls from drainage ditches are to be cleaned in the autumn of each year.

Ditches: The Environment Agency have the ultimate responsibility of ensuring Kirby Brook is cleared of reeds on a regular basis. However, due to recent cutbacks they have now abrogated that responsibility to the landowners through which their ditches run. The condition of the ditches should therefore be monitored on an annual basis and if necessary, should be cleared of obstructions where it is thought they may impact on the effective drainage of the course. Always bearing in mind the limitations laid down by the SSSI requirements and Natural England restrictions and pre applied licence.

Temporary Greens/Tees

It is the policy at Frinton not to use temporary Greens and Tees unless forced to do so for course maintenance or construction purposes or, if in the opinion of the Course Manager, they are necessary to protect the condition of the course.

Bunkers

A bunker audit has been carried out by course architect James Edwards, there are currently no bunker renovation plans, any future improvements will be put to the board for approval.

Timing of Work on the Course

Frinton Links 5 Year Plan

Much essential work must be completed before a certain time in the year. It will be the aim of the Course Manager, in regular discussions with the Greens Committee and Manager/Secretary, to plan this work well in advance so that periods in which work must be done can be arranged to consider the Golf Programme and communicated to Members as required.

Closing the Course

The course may be closed on the authority of the Course Manager in conjunction with the Manager/Secretary/Chairman of Green when unusual weather conditions have occurred and damage to the course would result if play were permitted.

The Manager/Secretary may close the course under similar circumstances should he feel it necessary with the senior green staff present.

In the absence of the Course Manager, the Assistant to the Course Manager may seek approval to close the course through the Manager/Secretary/Professional/Chairman of Greens.

During a competition, the Course may be closed by the Manager/Secretary or an authorised member of the Committee if they consider the greens are unplayable or play becomes dangerous through poor visibility, thunder and lightning in accordance with Rule 6-8 of the Rules of Golf (discontinuance of play).

The procedure for closing the Course is set out in the document entitled 'Criteria Required for Closing the Course', attached to this report in Appendix D.

Green Staff and Members — Priority of Work:

The Green staff will be vigilant to ensure they do not delay work unreasonably whilst on the course during the playing hours. Work will always be productive and is especially important at the beginning of the day to the start of the official competitions i.e., at 8.00am; the green staff has priority on the course. After 8.00am the members have priority.

Members have priority only when starting from the 1st tee after 8:00am. Where necessary for continuous work to go ahead, a complete hole may be placed out of play.

All players are asked to consider green staff by not stopping their work unreasonably.

Work by outside contractors on the course, i.e., green deep drilling, will wherever possible be on non-competitions days, however, it may be necessary due to financial implications for the contractors to work uninterrupted.

Members will be advised of such occasions through appropriate notices displayed on notice boards.

Banning of Buggies, 3 Wheel Buggies, Electric and Standard Trolleys:

When course conditions are such that the continued use of Buggies, 3 Wheel Buggies, Electrical and standard trolleys would cause unreasonable damage to the Course, they will be banned on the decision of the Course Manager and Manager/Secretary'. A daily review of the course conditions will then take place until normal playing conditions prevail.

Complaints:

Frinton Links 5 Year Plan

Members and visitors may not complain about the conduct of a member of the green staff or about the state of the course to any member of the green staff. Such complaints must be made to the Manager/Secretary who will investigate the matter with the Course Manager and refer the matter to the Greens Committee and Management Committee where necessary.

Financial Control

All Green finance is authorised by the Management Board and the procedure covering finance is as follows:

The need/requirement is first identified by the Greens Committee discussed, costed if appropriate and approved.

The costing of a project, piece of machinery etc, is as per the Club Code of practice for Tendering. The recommendation, costings as appropriate will then be raised at a Board Meeting by the Chairman of Green for their approval.