

EGM under rule 21 of the HGC rules and regulations

Course Drainage Proposals

Heswall Golf Club

EGM – Tuesday 19th March 2024

Introduction

The current high rainfall and resulting course closures have highlighted the need for Heswall Golf Club to invest urgently in significant improvements to the Course drainage. In its current state the course only remains playable for 7 or 8 months of the year, this is not a new situation. We fully appreciate the current Financial position that HGC finds itself in and believe that the recent decision to spend around £825,000 (inc Vat) on course irrigation should be reviewed and a significant amount of the Capital diverted towards Drainage Improvements.

Continuing with the Irrigation plans as they are will leave little or no money available for what are essential drainage improvements. We will also have to mothball other “major” projects that are in the pipeline such as Clubhouse internal changes, Solar Panel installation and Green keeping Building replacement etc.

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- Lack of water has never closed Heswall Golf Club, lack of adequate Drainage closes it regularly. The need for improved drainage is immediate and is essential if we are to retain the current members and continue to attract new members
- Other Local Clubs have implemented exactly the form of Irrigation maintenance improvements we are suggesting. Prenton leak checked and repaired their system in house, commissioned an electrical engineering contractor to make repairs and install a new Irrigation control system. All of this at a total cost of less than £30,000
- There would appear to have been a lack of Due Diligence with the Irrigation Project. We have not looked at utilising the Irrigation equipment installed in 2006/7 to the 6 new holes on the course. We failed to consult with the 2006 installation Company 2iC who have the specification and drawings.
- We have simply gone for the most expensive option without due regard to any alternative option, great if you are a rich club but we obviously are not.

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- The Club may tell us that this winters rain was such that no form of course drainage would have been adequate and that the likes of Royal Liverpool, Wallasey and Hillside have been closed for the occasional day.
- We would certainly agree with that and this winters rainfall has been of biblical proportions, but this problem is not recent. Over the last 7 or 8 years we have suffered from boggy and unplayable conditions to areas of the course where original drainage installed 100 years ago has broken down. The course now presents an 8 months a year playable layout at best.

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- When the course was extended in 2006 we employed a drainage Consultant to design and oversee drainage installation to the new fairways on the 5th, 6th, 8th and 9th. Members will agree that these fairways in the main have remained playable throughout the recent rainfall.
- The example of what can be done with drainage installations is to compare the 9th fairway with the 10th. It's the same stretch of land, the 9th is excellent and the 10th very boggy.
- The 5th fairway admittedly occasionally looks like a lake due to the high water table, it is the lowest part of the course. However once the water table drops the fairway returns firm and fully playable. This is an example of what can be achieved if adequate drainage is installed.
- Show video 12th

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- A member suggested to me this week that maybe we should be looking in the first instance at providing a playable winter layout that will get us back to the Clubhouse, an excellent idea.
- To do this we could concentrate on Drainage installations to the 1st, 2nd and 10th and improving the drainage already installed on the 11th and 12th .
- We have as members become quite happy during the winter months playing a shorter course which also has the benefit of allowing more members to play during the short winter days

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- It is interesting that currently we have been playing 9 holes, with the exception of the holes on the top of the course these are the new holes are where drainage has been installed
- We believe that if improvements are not made urgently to course drainage that there is a very high chance of the Club losing members due to un-playability from November to April.
- The fact that we are having this EGM is already being discussed within Golf Clubs in the North West highlighting awareness of the winter conditions at HGC this can only hurt our reputation and the waiting list.

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- A Membership survey by accountants Hillier Hopkins published by “National Club Golfer suggests that there is a fall in golf club membership across the country
- This trend they feel will continue due to the increased cost of membership coupled with the average age profile of golf clubs where 64% of members are over 55 and 21% over 70. Nearly a quarter of surveyed clubs reported more members leaving than joining and, overall, clubs reported fewer members joining last year
- Any reduction in membership numbers could well result in the Financial model proposed when the Irrigation was approved at the EGM in October very difficult to achieve

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- The intention is we understand to incorporate the current £870K debt we have with the Bank which has around 7or 8 years to run at an excellent interest rate and combining this with another £500K loan for a further 20 years. The costs of extending the £870K existing debt for a further 20 years at a much higher interest rate has not been fully explained.
- Any loss of members will inevitably lead to increased surcharges and increases to subscriptions If this were the case we could see HGC potentially suffering further membership losses exacerbating the situation with the potential for catastrophic financial consequences.

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Conclusion

We believe the main priority for Heswall Golf Club should be to make dramatic improvements to the Drainage system throughout the Course.

Based on the previous drainage installation costs the installation of adequate drainage linked to retaining and improving the existing Irrigation system could be completed within a significantly reduced budget. This will dramatically reduce the Financial burden on the members and the Club going forward

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- Proposal
- We are requesting that the Golf Club commission a full independent survey of Drainage on the Golf Course with the intention of providing a full specification for the installation of necessary drainage throughout.
- In order to ensure we have sufficient Capital available for this work we should review the decision to replace the Irrigation System and look seriously at maintaining and improving the system we currently have installed.