



## **Course Development Plan**

**January 2021**



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## 1. Introduction and Context

The purpose of this Course Development Plan (CDP) is to set out the high-level direction for the future development of our golf course. This plan provides context and focus areas related to the development of our golf course. Furthermore for the the Board it will provide longer term visibility of the proposed development of our golf course so that they can ensure that there are sufficient levels of funding are available to support the implementation plans together with continuity of direction.

The indicative timelines for projects in Section 3. will be subject to review annually based on conditions and annual priorities for our business and the club's annual business planning process which sets the budgets for the subsequent year.

We have an overall objective to maintain our championship golf course to a high standard and to undertake further development where appropriate. The objective, restated in our updated Strategic Plan of 2021, is to provide a high quality golfing experience for all of our members and also member's guests and visitors. We will achieve this by having attention to detail in all that we do, but also respecting the heritage of our course, which is over a hundred years old.

As clearly identified in the Members Survey conducted in the autumn of 2020 the golf course is the number one priority for the membership. This Course Development Plan (CDP) has been developed in the context of this overall high priority area for our membership. It is the case the our golf course has suffered from historical under-investment. Historically the approach to investment has been driven by what can be afforded rather than what is required/necessary. The aim of the CDP, and the club's overall business plan is to ensure that we are able to support the Course Manager and his team achieve the objective of delivering a well presented course for the maximum time during the year, 'presentation and playability' are our overarching objectives.

To achieve this we need to provide the following:

- the correct size, and skilled Green Team. We plan to augment the team size by one additional person in 2021, and add a further additional team member in 2022 to bring the total Green Team size to eight. Our benchmarking has shown us that this is the right size of team that we need to maintain and develop our golf course.
- the right machinery and supplies to enable the Green Team, to deliver the course that the members and guests expect and deserve. In 2021 we have planned to increase the operational budget for the Green Team.
- investment funds to develop and enhance the course - Projects. We believe that we need to plan for a project budget of at least £30,000 per annum, and probably more, for investment in our golf course.

We are rightly proud of our history of being a sought-after venue for major golf tournaments, hosting events for the R&A, England Golf and the Yorkshire Union on a regular basis. The championship nature of our course also enables us to charge premium rates for visitor green fees. However we also remain fully mindful of the need to present a course that meets the needs of our diverse range of members and their guests.

## 2. Approach

The approach that we will take to the development of our golf course is to use the knowledge and experience of our Course Manager Neil Horton complemented by working with external experts, these external experts are listed below. Using external and specialist resources will, we believe, bring sustained and significant benefit to our golf course and over time increase the enjoyment of our members and visitors. We know that there is significant work to do and would highlight two priority areas (i) tidying up from the extensive Woodland Work and (ii) improving drainage and improve playability in winter, more on these topics below.

Central to everything will be a focus on the agronomic health of our golf course. We have re-established our partnership with STRI to monitor status and the trend of our progress over time. The regular reports from STRI will be published to members. The focus will be on deep, superficial and surface thatch management via various aeration techniques. The greens, surrounds and approaches will be the primary focus but all mown and some rough areas will be part of these core activities and it will include the practice ground. Additionally the Green Team will be proactive in weed control.

We will also be sensitive to our course heritage and in particular Pannal's Heathland/Moorland origins which have been affected by planting of non-indigenous species of both trees and shrubs in recent decades. The woodland management programme (2018 - 2020) has created the opportunity to restore aspects of the heath. This is not a quick nor guaranteed process but pursuing this aim should reap both aesthetic and ecological rewards. Specifically we will use of heather turf on some bunker constructions and trial heather transplant techniques.

The felling aspect of our woodland management programme is now complete and has given us the enhanced airflow and light to create the opportunity to forge healthy agronomics. This initiative needs now to be completed to a high standard with the creation of attractive and environmentally appropriate woodland floors. The Course Manager and his team have commenced this project with intensive weed control and further progress will be made during the current winter period and into the spring of 2021. Considerable work has already been undertaken by the Green Team supported by our volunteers in tidying up from the extensive woodland management programme, and management of the gorse, but further work remains to be done including localised thinning of trees where required.

Following on from the recent wet winters one of our strategic priorities is to create, via the addition of improved drainage and pathways, a golf course that can be open for as many days of the year as possible. This 'network' aims to create some winter hole routings that can keep parts of the course open in the depths of winter and allow some level of sport. This drive to improve the length of the season and to improve playability will be a multi-year project.

Our external experts and advisors are listed below:

- **Course Architect – Ken Moodie, Creative Golf Design**  
<https://creativegolfdesign.com>
- **Agronomy – Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI)**  
<https://strigroup.com/sport/golf/>
- **Woodland Management – John Nicholson Associates,**  
[https://www.johnnicholsonassociates.co.uk/page/golf\\_design\\_overview/](https://www.johnnicholsonassociates.co.uk/page/golf_design_overview/)
- **Ecology - James Hutchinson, Ecology & Sustainability, British International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA)**  
<https://www.bigga.org.uk>

For each aspect of our golf course we have identified a set of principles for where we want to get to, these are laid out in the table below:

Domain	Objectives
<b>Drainage &amp; Paths</b>	Improve the drainage across the course to improve playability especially in the winter months
	Paths that are level firm and dry and which enable easy access for golfers and machinery
<b>Greens</b>	True, smooth, firm and dry
	Consistent within and between greens
	Provide an acceptable and consistent speed
	Provide a good standard for as much of the year as possible
<b>Bunkers</b>	Dry and firm
	Consistent across the whole course
	Shaped and raked to keep balls away from the bunker edge
<b>Tees</b>	Level, firm and dry
	Of a size the allow adequate recovery capacity
<b>Fairways</b>	Firm and dry
	Provide consistently acceptable lies
<b>Rough</b>	To make the rough fairer through thinning so that balls can be more easily found
<b>Woodlands</b>	Presented in a tidy and high quality fashion
	Enable balls to be found easily

We will also develop operational policies and KPI's for such activities as cut heights, frequency of hole changes etc. so that we have clear measurable objectives and the ability to manage performance over time. In developing the plans for the future we will continue to be guided by Ken Moodie, see Appendix but we believe that the priority for the coming years has to be drainage and paths.

Improving winter 'playability' is the priority for this plan. The Green OSC and our Course Manager know that significant work is required in all areas and that we will have to prioritise.

### 3. Planned Projects

In developing the future project plans we have to consider the need to ensure that we have a good balance between underlying infrastructure work, such as drainage, where the benefits are not immediately apparent and the need to develop our course to a high standard for players such as the surfaces, bunkers etc. Based on the feedback from our members our two priorities are drainage and playability and secondly bringing our bunkers up to a consistent standard. Our current focus is drainage and playability but it is recognised that we need to include bunker work into the overall programme of work, and further work to do this is required. Our work will be guided by the recommendations and plans from our Course Architect, Ken Moodie (ref Appendix) where we think they are right for our course.

The balance described above is what we have sought to achieve in the winter programme for winter 2020/21.

#### Winter 2020/21 Project

The Winter 2020/21 comprised two broad elements, drainage and bunkers on holes 13 and 16. In respect of drainage we have done three things in the winter of 2020. The team have cleared the peripheral ditches alongside the first and second holes, we have also installed a major new drain on the first hole leading away from the new extension of the tee. The new all-weather path leading from the tee to the first fairway has also been installed. We also verti-drained all of the fairways and this is already showing benefits, and this process will be done annually going forward. We have also started to make some changes to the pond on hole 18 and remove the lower pond and make it an open stream, this will require the removal of some of the existing walls.

The two new bunkers are close to being finalised, and these are part of our programme to 'tighten' up our par fives which we know are weak which has been one of the areas highlighted by our Course Architect. In 2022 Pannal will hold the Northern Qualifier of England Golf's prestigious Brabazon Trophy and we need to ensure that our course is an adequate challenge and that we can continue to host similar events in the future, this we believe enhances our reputation.

#### Winter Projects for the period 2021/22 to 2023/24

In looking forward we see that "Drainage and Playability" has to be the priority. Currently the Green Team are doing work to clear all of the ditches on the course and undertake an audit of the previous drainage work as to what fairways have been drained, and the date when this work was done. The reality being that drainage does not last forever and benchmarking shows that one should plan for an effective life of ten years. We also know that we have six greens on the course which have no drainage and these need to be looked at as to whether drainage is required, specifically holes 2, 3, 8, 11, 13 and 17; this will be a decision for the Course Manager.

We consider that this significant drainage programme of work needs to be split over a number of years, given the likely material cost and we envisage three phases as outlined below but this needs to be confirmed by the detailed planning assessment work that we have already initiated. However we believe that this work once implemented this will have a very material positive impact on the playability of our golf course.

The three phases that we are considering are:

- Phase 1 : the low part of our course holes 1 - 5 plus 18
- Phase 2 : holes 10 to 13
- Phase 3 : holes 6, 7, 8, and 9

Taking each of these in turn. Our immediate priority, we believe, is the lower part of the course and we will work with external specialist drainage consultants and contractors to develop a detailed plan of what needs to be done. The reason for making this the priority is that we need



these holes to be more playable in winter so that players can get to the higher part of the golf course. As noted above the team are looking in detail at what has been done previously but we know that further work in this area is required, both in terms of upgraded drains and potentially improved peripheral ditches.

The Phase 2 work covering holes 10 -13 needs to address as a priority hole 11 which is one of the worst holes on our course for drainage. It is also our current understanding that whilst work was done relatively recently on hole 12, there is no drainage on hole 13. Based on the information that we currently have available we believe that whilst there is some drainage on the 11th hole where work was most recently undertaken in 2007/08, however it is neither efficient nor effective and this needs to be addressed. Some members have commented that the peripheral ditch in the adjacent woodland presents an opportunity, it does perhaps but only in part. This ditch, especially part on first half of the hole nearest the tee is materially higher than the fairway. In this part it is not silted, looking at the base of the ditch which is fed by a spring in adjacent land owned by a farmer one can easily see the original base layer of clay. We also have plans to make some alterations to the bunkering on the 11th hole (see Course Plans in the Appendix) and our initial thinking is to do this at the same time as the drainage work to minimise the impact on our members.

The third Phase of planned drainage work covers holes 6, 7, 8 and 9. We need to investigate the bottom half of the sixth hole, especially in front of the green, which is very wet. There is an overgrown ditch between the 7th tee and 8th green, this is overgrown and will be cleared this winter. The land to the left of the 7th tee as one plays the hole, is also extremely wet. Our initial thinking, to be confirmed based on discussions with our drainage experts and course architect is to potentially extend the ditch either side of the pine woodland between holes 7 and 8.

Whether Phase 3 should precede Phase 2 is not yet determined and will be addressed in the detailed planning work. The Green OSC are in the process of developing more detailed plans for this drainage & playability programme which along with proposed costings and timelines will be agreed with the Board. The finalised plans will then be shared with the membership.

As noted above in parallel with this drainage & playability work we will also seek to undertake elements of the Ken Moodie course development plan as funding and manpower is available, but the priority of our current Course Development Plan (CDP) is "Drainage and Playability".



## **Appendix : Course Architect Plans**

See three Separate Documents

1. Course Architect Plans
2. Holes 1 -9
3. Additional Plans and Holes 10 -18



