



GOLF COURSE IRRIGATION

Member Update

Introduction

In 2016 it became apparent from issues highlighted by our course staff that our existing irrigation system was in a deteriorating condition. While it was possible to address some issues by replacing sprinkler heads and upgrading the control system the main concern was that the pipework, valves and pumps were reaching the end of their useful life.

The Management Committee reviewed the matter and having examined practices and experiences elsewhere in the golf industry decided to seek expert advice. Through our course consultants, The Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI), an independent irrigation expert was engaged to evaluate the entire system.

STRI/RHA Report

Adrian Mortram from Robin Hume Associates (RHA) conducted a detailed examination of the system in August 2017 and reported back to the Management Committee in October 2017.

This report is available to view in the Members Area of the Club website ('Member Information Documents') or can be requested in hard copy from the Club's reception desk. It should be read or referred to in conjunction with reading this document. In particular, the 'Introduction and Executive Summary' (Section 1 of the report) provides a concise assessment of the current system.

Mr Mortram's findings were consistent with the issues reported by our course staff:

- Old pipework with glued joints that cannot withstand the pressure it takes to irrigate course in a normal timespan
- Unable to apply water evenly
- Frequent malfunctions

- Significant leakage reflected by rapid drop in pressure levels when pumps shut off

From an operational point of view, working at best efficiency the existing system struggles to irrigate our greens and gives only limited and erratic coverage to fairways, tees and walkways. It can take 15 hours to run a full cycle thereby interfering with late evening/ early morning play. Frequently the system can shut out in the middle of the night for no apparent reason leaving the course only partially watered.

Management Decision

Taking account of Mr. Mortram's report, together with the opinion and advice of the STRI and our Course Manager, the conclusion of the Management Committee was to proceed with evaluating a new system. It was recognised that the Club faced an issue which would not be resolved overnight, but with an ailing irrigation system it was incumbent upon the Committee to present to members the necessary information that would enable an informed decision on a possible replacement system.

In addition to professional reports and opinions, the drought we witnessed in the summer of 2018 brought to the fore the many deficiencies of the current irrigation system, following which the Management Committee commissioned Mr. Mortram to prepare a design for a replacement system which could be put to tender and costed.

Presentation to members

In April 2019 a Member Information meeting took place at which presentations were made by our Course Manager Wayne Murray and by Mr Mortram. Both presentations can be viewed in the Members Area of the Club website ('Member Information Documents')

Apart from highlighting the issues with the current irrigation system the meeting gave both presenters the opportunity to explain the importance and benefits of a modern efficient system. The purpose of golf course irrigation is not just to keep grass alive; it is a moisture management tool, maximising chemical applications, wetting agent, top-dressing and over-seeding, and therefore essential for effective turf care and management.

Project Management

Following the Member Information meeting of April 2019, the Management Committee appointed a sub-committee to examine every element of an irrigation project. This included direct engagement with Adrian Mottram and investigative work on water supply, water storage, electrical power supply, planning requirements and visits to other courses. The sub-committee reports monthly to the Management Committee. The members of the sub-committee are John Mullen, Jim McMahan, Oonagh Purfield, Liam Murphy and Wayne Murray.

In June 2019 Mr Mortram commenced his design work having spent two days at the Club. His preliminary design was received in August and following a further visit in November to confirm main pipe routings and sprinkler configuration ongoing communication is taking place to get to a final design.

Next Steps

We will now engage further with Mr Mortram over the coming weeks to get to a point where we have accurate costings based on a specification that fully meets our requirements. The Management Committee will then make a detailed presentation to members. This will include

- Project Overview
- Project Cost Estimate
- Funding Proposal
- Project Management
- Timeline / impact on golf course

Members will be afforded the opportunity to enquire and comment on all aspects of course irrigation. The feedback will further inform the Management Committee in advance of bringing to members any proposal or recommendation to proceed with a replacement system at a Special General Meeting.

Richie Quirke
Chairman

9th January 2019