

## **Aspirations for Stonehaven Golf Course**

The following is a policy statement by the Council of Stonehaven Golf Club, Approved April, 2004 and Amended in April, 2005.



The statement reads:

In drawing up a long-term plan for Stonehaven Golf Course, it is necessary first to define what sort of golf course we want to have, how we want it set up and how we want it looked after.

In doing this, we are not in any way usurping the role of the Head Greenkeeper – nor are we trying to do his job. What we are doing, however, is informing him of OUR aspirations for the course and how WE would like it set up for golf. It is then his job to use his expertise and experience to give us what we want.

In describing these aspirations for the course, it is perhaps useful first to agree what Stonehaven golf course is NOT: it is not a championship-standard course and it can never aspire to be.

It will always be a short course; it will always have awkward side slopes and borrows; it will always have small greens that are difficult to find from a distance; it will always have fairways that criss-cross and cause delays.

And the course will always have a clay-based under-soil which causes drainage difficulties in the wet, growth problems in the dry and generally limits the number of weeks of the year in which we can expect our greens to be in prime condition for putting, certainly compared to links courses with their sand-based under-soil.

Our course, however, will also always have a number of crucial natural assets. It has a spectacular setting, which gives it character and attraction. It has a number of memorable tees and holes, with players standing often on top of steep cliffs and having to play shots across dramatic gullies.

It also has fairways and greens, which have in the past been as good as any in the North-east – and we would most certainly like them to be at that standard again. These assets ought to combine to make Stonehaven a memorable golfing experience. We aim first of all to set up and maintain our course to such a high standard in terms of tidiness and conditioning that it is always enjoyable for our members and our visitors to play.

We bear in mind that our membership includes a number of low-handicap players -- but a significant majority of middle-handicap and high-handicap players. Our visitors also tend mostly to be middle- to high-handicap players.

The natural contours of the land – and the “normal” weather conditions which prevail -- mean that a significant degree of difficulty is already built into our course and we do not believe it is necessary for us to add greatly to that difficulty in setting up the course, particularly when our standard-scratch ratings are one shot below par, with the competition standard scratch often a further shot lower.

For example, we do not need rough anywhere on the course which causes players problems in finding their ball; nor do we need bunkers with faces so steep that only the best players can get out first time. In fact, we should think long and hard before we add any more bunkers or hazards to a course which already has many natural difficulties built in.

The set up we want, therefore, might best be described as “neutral” – that is to leave the hazards we have but not add to them nor make them more difficult. That gives us the best chance of having a course which should appeal to members of all standards of play and also meet the needs of the visitors we must attract in ever-greater numbers.

While we will never have, as stated before, a “championship-standard” course, what we can aspire to is to have a course that is as well looked after and tidy as any in the North-east. We want it to look well groomed and well cared for.

First impressions are always important and what visitors should see when they arrive at the club, apart from the spectacular views across the first fairway to the sea, is a manicured course, an immaculate

practice putting green, clean-swept paths round the clubhouse, neat, tidy and colourful flower beds and a flat, well-maintained first tee. And we want to work towards the rest of the course looking just as good as that.

As a norm, the expertise of our green staff should ensure that these aspirations for the course are met, but we reserve the right if necessary to call in extra outside specialists when expert advice is needed to solve any particular problem.

Another section of this long-term plan contains a hole-by-hole look at the course but the following are the key aspirations in relation to the main elements of the course

### **Tees**

All tees should be:

- \*Flat
- Clearly defined
- Close cut to approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$ inch

All tees should have:

- Discs placed carefully to define teeing ground
- Discs facing the correct direction for the line of play
- Discs placed no fewer than two club lengths from the back of the teeing ground to comply with the Rules of Golf
- Care should be taken in the placing of discs - eg to ensure that any uneven areas of the teeing ground are avoided whenever possible
- Waste-paper bins provided
- Sponsored ball-washers provided.
- Bankings around tees should not be shaved tight, but cut with Flymos with raised blades rather than with strimmers, as has been done in the past
- Teeing grounds should be rotated regularly and, after use, should be dressed and repaired and taken out of action.

### **Fairways and Rough**

- Fairways should be shaped and clearly defined and aim towards greens
- Fairways should be cut to approximately  $\frac{5}{8}$ inch as a recommended height
- Rough at each side should be graded – first cut at approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, then second cut to approximately 2 inches (amended in April 2005 from  $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches)
- The deepest rough on the course will be at approximately 2 inches (amended in April 2005 from  $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches), which should not cause players undue delay in finding their ball
- Divots on fairways should be sanded and replaced at regular intervals.

### **Greens**

- Greens should be smooth and good to putt on
- They should be cut as closely as weather conditions permit and have as consistent a texture as possible all round the course
- They should have an apron and all greens should be clearly defined at the edges - ie, players should know immediately if they are on or off the putting surface
- Care should be taken in the placing of the hole – for example, side-slopes, slopes at the back or front of greens and worn areas of the green should be avoided
- Care should be taken in the cutting of the hole – ie, the edges should be sharp and level
- Care should be taken in the replacement of old holes so that no deviation is caused to the line of a rolling ball
- Holes should be moved around greens regularly, at least twice a week in summer
- When a new hole is cut, the cup should be the recommended depth below the surface
- Bankings around greens should be cut with Flymos and not shaved tight
- The practice green in front of the clubhouse and the green in the practice area at the side of the first fairway should be given as much priority as any other green
- All greens should have a sign advising players to repair pitch-marks.

### **Bunkers**

- Bunkers should have a consistent type and depth of sand
- Sand should have as low a clay content as practical
- Back lips of bunkers should be low
- Sand should be raked towards the front of all bunkers

- Rakes should be provided at all bunkers
- Bunkers should have neat and tidy edges which are cut short
- Faces of bunkers should be kept tidy and the grass on them cut short
- Rakes should be placed inside bunkers, with handles at the back of the bunker and the rake-head towards the front.

**On-course Information**

- All signs and on-course notices should be correctly placed and well maintained
- Out-of-bounds posts should be freshly painted and correctly placed
- Fairway directional marker posts should be correctly placed and easily removable by players

**General Tidiness**

- Every effort should be made by greenstaff to keep the course as tidy as possible at all times
- Members should also be reminded of their responsibilities in regard to not dropping litter on the course
- Litter bins should be strategically placed and emptied regularly
- Any litter on the course should be picked up promptly by green staff and member
- Areas around seats and steps should be strimmed regularly to keep them clear of weeds.
- The area around the shoe-cleaning machine in front of the clubhouse should be brushed clean regularly, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays. The Head Greenkeeper and his staff will undertake this task.