

# Bunkers

We receive more comments (both critical and supportive it has to be said) about bunkers than any other matter. This is entirely normal: PGA tour players have more comment about bunkers than anything else as well. Even top courses with many more green keepers than us get the most comments about bunkers: inconsistent, too much sand, too little sand, not raked, balls sticking in the face etc. Please accept that they will never be perfect: they are hazards. That said, we continually strive to make them as good as we can and some facts might help all players understand the issues involved.

The factors that change the condition of bunkers are: wind, rain, the chalk subsoil which moves and cracks allowing stones to migrate up and sand to fall down, the thin top soil and 'sand blow' making strong grass growth difficult to establish and maintain in all cases and the design employed here at the Gogs.

## Raking

We currently aim to rake the bunkers 3 or 4 times per week and have regular sessions where the team refresh them entirely. Currently up to 25% of all green keepers' time is spent on bunkers. Members can play their part by raking the sand in a recommended manner: pushing sand to the middle not pulling it to the back as you exit. Please watch one or both of these videos:

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=how+to+rake+a+bunker&docid=608017298895670944&mid=43C4E0DE5FB9058452B043C4E0DE5FB9058452B0&view=detail&FORM=VIRE4>

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=how+to+rake+a+bunker&docid=608027460792355747&mid=1C6E2BBC5F3BF4A9A3911C6E2BBC5F3BF4A9A391&view=detail&FORM=VIRE6>

## Sand

The sand we currently have is a plated sand. The individual sand particles are angular and this causes the particles to compact tightly together, particularly when wet. When the sand gets wet it stays wet and takes a long time to dry out. As the sand does dry the top cm or so becomes dust-like leaving the sand beneath compacted and requiring a great deal of work to put right. Often mechanical decompaction is the only answer but this often causes disruption to the bunker base and chalk, flint and soil is brought to the surface.

## Liners

We have also started to investigate the potential use of some of the modern bunker liners and will be visiting clubs that have installed them. The cost of installation for all of ours could be significant as much as £1 - 2m for the whole course for some of the newer systems, but until we have more facts, cannot comment further. Also bunker liners are not a cure all. A good deal of labour is still required to ensure plenty of sand is kept on the bunker face to avoid exposing the liner and being snagged by golfers.

## Action

In the short term, we are recruiting to replace the apprentice who left in the summer and hire an additional person to take care of all the non green keeping activities that the team cover, thus freeing more time for them to work on the course.

The winter programme and the proposals for redesigning the Old Course will include significant changes to many of the bunkers. This will be a big opportunity to redesign those that we know to be troublesome such as the group on the ninth.

We will over the coming year seek sand varieties that are better suited to the Gogs and will change if we find one that is significantly better: what works for one course may not be suitable to all courses.

*NB: Please visit the Club website under Course Update for the link above.*

Steve Lang  
on behalf of the Management Council

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