

Annual Ecological/Landscape Assessment

STRI

Sale Golf Club

Report Date: 5th October 2012

Consultant: Bob Taylor



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Report Title	Annual Ecological/Landscape Assessment
Sports Facility Name	Sale Golf Club
Date of Visit	3 rd October 2012
Visit Objective	To assess on-going ecological landscape works and discuss recommendations for continued improvement
Present	Mr Chris Boyes – Secretary Mr John Stubbs – Greens Committee Mr Chris Hulme – Head Greenkeeper Mr David Jones – Chairman Environmental Sub Committee Mr Don Jackson – Environmental Sub Committee Mrs Margaret Cook – Environmental Sub Committee Mr Terry Christie – Environmental Sub Committee Mr Bob Taylor – STRI Ltd

Introduction

This year's ecological/landscape assessment of the golf course was undertaken slightly later in the season, but during relatively favourable weather conditions such that the main areas being considered could be appropriately discussed. Recommendations at the time of the visit have been detailed within the following section below.

General Observations, Comments & Specific Recommendations

We discussed the need to consider topping the Leylandii on the road side of the overflow car park which are now above the height of any required screening. Topping these trees by 600mm or thereabouts will allow for a further expansion and establishment of the understorey trees on the course side. It will also importantly help the Leylandii to thicken so maintaining a stronger and more dense screen over a longer period.



Need to top the existing screening Lellandii

Consideration was given to the ponds to the left of the 2nd approach and green. The carp pond to the left of the green is tending to dry out and it appears that the clay lining has been breached during past excavation work. The area however still supports significant wildlife interest and I did not on this occasion recommend any additional management intervention. The larger pond to the left of the 2nd approach, although supporting a significant area of open water does support *Crassula helmsii* (Australian stone crop) which is a very tenacious and difficult weed and one which will need to be controlled. In understand the pond does dry out during the drier spring periods and it may be that at this time the pond could be scrapped. Indeed, the common reed on the southeast side could also be reduced in its extent, but care will need to be taken to ensure that any work is done outside the bird breeding season i.e. before the end of March.



Overgrown water feature to the left of the 3rd carry

The water feature to the left of the 3rd hole is becoming quite overgrown and losing its visual appeal as a water feature. We discussed the need to implement management to at least 30% through the more in-play section and/or along the strip running back towards the tramline. This however was not seen as a major priority for this year, but should be included in the maintenance plan for 2013. There is a limited time period when the water feature can be cleaned and this falls between September to late October of any year. This year ground conditions are exceptionally wet and any management will lead to significant loss of cover and damage. Australian stone crop was noted through the centre of this water feature.

I was pleased to hear that the tree planting along the metro line is to commence this winter period and some of the work will involve the development of a formal hedge with standards together with traditional trees planted informally on the course side. The area does tend to lie wet for significant periods through the year and this problem has seemed to increase since the construction work commenced. I do urge you to ensure that the tree mix being provided is entirely appropriate and does consist of wet loving species such as Alder, Goat willow and willow. It may indeed be possible to swap some of the trees of initial concern with these trees to ensure a good mix. Ensure that the trees are planted at close 2m spacing (maximum) to ensure rapid acceleration of growth and establishment. The trees will need to extend out by a minimum of 4, and ideally 6m so as to enable sufficient trees to be introduced through each area. Planting closely will allow for scalloping and for thinning later i.e. as the trees establish. Note – ensure that the area to the back left of the 3rd green is entirely stocked with appropriate tree and scrub species.



General view through 4th hole.

The 4th hole is a very attractive golf hole from the first bunkers and through to the green. The line of Manchester poplars however detracts from the quality of this hole and we did all agree that whilst the first birch and two Manchester poplars should be retained, the 7 trees through and towards the green should be removed. This would expose 4 silver birch to view and will allow for further planting. Following the removal of the 7 poplars, under plant with Alder and silver birch through the area of the establishing birch extending back by 18m to the line of the retained poplars. Plant in discreet single species groupings in a close 2m spacing this will ensure maintenance of safety between holes and if planted out into the line of play slightly it will help ensure that golfers line up correctly for the hole.

The dead wood from the poplar could be scattered within the centre of the retained woodlands, and or stored as log piles.



General view of 5th hole

Significant work has been undertaken through the 5th hole in respect of improving the tree lines. Within the first group to the right of the carry Cherry and a grand fir tend to dominate. The former are relatively short lived and I recommend that this year a further 5 alders be introduced through to the sentinel horse chestnut at 3m spacing to create a more substantial and long lived feature.





Left of 13th green

Significant work has been undertaken to the left of the 13th green to create a grassy bank with more attractive ornamental scrubs. This has been partially successful and the planting work will improve over the next few years. However, at the time of this visit we did conclude that it would be important to give real definition between the managed areas i.e. those areas to be managed by the green staff and those areas to be developed as woodland edge or ornamental scrub. This will involve further planting to reduce the frequency of spacing using more native flowering scrub species. Guelder rose and gorse would be appropriate, but will need to be introduced in more discreet groupings, both to the front left of the green i.e. woodland margin and along as an informal scalloped row. Plant at no more than 1m spacing and the gorse will need to be introduced following surface/sub-surface acidification using elemental flowers of sulphur at a rate of 70g/m² and additionally calcined sulphate of iron at a rate of 12g/m² (1/3oz/yd²). The sulphur will break down slowly i.e. with bacterial action through 2013. The calcined sulphate of iron will give a more immediate acidifying effect. Should more discussion be needed with regard the use of these chemicals please contact David Lawson STRI soil chemist to discuss further 01274 565131



Backdrop to 18th green

Work over the last few years has been centred on improving the back drop to the 18th green by both selective tree removal and significant tree/scrub planting. On the occasion of this visit we agreed that a stronger hedge line should be created just back from the existing edge to screen the car park.

This is to be constructed as a double row edge of hawthorn with hazel field maple at close 30-40cm spacing along and between rows. Plant discreet groupings in multiples of 3, 6, 9, 12 etc. Leave sufficient space back and towards the green i.e. 4m to develop a stronger and more visually striking scrub margin. We agreed here that it may be best to introduce discreet groupings or different scrubs in an offset or oblique manner choosing those that will give good seasonal colour and interest. Evergreen species such as Yew, ververus, holly will give year round cover. Plants such as Guelder rose and gorse for example will give prolonged flowering interest. Plant at close 3.5m spacing in discreet groupings. It may be possible to lay a landscape fabric over the surface prior to developing a 200mm minimum depth of woodchip to make weeding easier. The woodchip may be sourced during on-course felling works.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RS Taylor', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and includes a large flourish at the end.

Bob Taylor
Ecology & Environment Manager