



## Woking completes first phase of forward tees project

Woking Golf Club in England has completed the first phase of a project to make its course more enjoyable for shorter hitters.

Its course previously required golfers to carry tee shots of up to 120 yards of heather.

So, after consultation with members, the club approved plans for a two-phase 18-tee programme to address playability while also ensuring a lasting environmental impact, so that the heathland habitats are not mown or left to degenerate into woodland.

The first phase has covered ten tees, seven of which are entirely new, and has limited carries over heather to a more manageable 60 to 70 yards. Pace of play has increased, and golfers are reporting a more enjoyable round.

Golf course architect Tim Lobb, who has been advising Woking for over six years, said: “When players can’t get the ball over heather, it can be replaced with mown grass, but you lose very valuable habitat in doing that. Woking is one of the world’s oldest heathland courses, founded in 1893. Respecting, restoring and maintaining

the ecological diversity of historically significant heathland is so important. My aim was to preserve, enhance and position the heath in front of the tees. We ensured that the tees are closer to fairways, blending in perfectly, hidden within the landscape so golfers enjoy an uninterrupted course view from the other teeing locations.”

Course manager Andy Ewence said: “Planning was the key to our success. It took us all a long time thinking it through, listening to our golfers, to other clubs, debating the details and issues with our committee, working



Photo: Jason Livy Photography

*Andy Ewence, Richard Pennell and Tim Lobb stand on the first hole's new forward tee. The forward tees project has limited carries over heather from 120 yards to a more manageable 60 to 70*



out where best to place tees with Tim Lobb's professional guidance and how to manage them."

Construction was completed by MJ Abbott in two weeks, during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic when UK courses were forced to close, and turfing was then completed by an in-house team.

"The tees are discreetly set within the heather and are all six by four metres, built to a high specification with graded bases, drainage, golf rootzone and irrigation," said Steve Briggs of MJ Abbott. "The irrigation

to the tees is an extension of the Rain Bird IC System, which gives us site-wide coverage."

Two Rain Bird 5004 Series Rotors operated by IC-controlled valves are being installed on each tee, integrated with the Rain Bird IC System with Stratus II Central Control that was installed in 2020. Irritech designed the system with larger diameter pipe sizes to enable it to be easily extended, with the option of more IC rotors to be added in the future.

"Rain Bird's rotors are robust: they're great for this size of tee," said Ewence.

"We also installed hosepipe points close to tees for hand watering while the heather was being established. We didn't have any plans for more greenkeeping staff so we also had to calculate precisely how much extra time it would take to look after the tees, which actually came to an extra five minutes per tee. Maintenance will be minimal, we won't use any more water, the heather will flower, attract wildlife and we've also made for happier golfers".

The club expects to complete the second phase within the next two years.