

Auchterarder Golf Club, Scotland



A Course on the Brink of Closure Benefits from Game-Changing Installation

Property Details:

Golf Course Manager

Archie Dunn

Project Consultants

Phil Langdon, 2ic

Contractor

MJ Abbott Limited

Rain Bird Distributor

Rigby Taylor

Rain Bird Products

IC System™

Stratus LT™ Central Control

IC CONNECT™

751 Series Block and IC Rotors

551 Series Block Rotors

CHALLENGE

Auchterarder Golf Club is a busy private members' club in Perth and Kinross. For the past 40 years, its greenkeeping team has maintained the club's parkland course with a rudimentary system installed by a plumber. There were no irrigation heads; just one hydrant at each green. Everything was manually-operated and fed from a 1" mains supply. It had been possible to operate up to six sprinklers with hoses, but deterioration of the pipework had reduced capacity to a single sprinkler. With almost complete reliance on the weather, trying to maintain a good golf course was virtually impossible, but relentless hand-watering had allowed them to get by. They struggled to achieve any consistency. Overseeding was too risky and applying products when the weather dictated, rather than when the turf needed them, meant they never felt in control of their maintenance.

In 2018 the UK experienced an unprecedented, season-long heatwave that pushed the club to the brink of closure. By August, the golf course was tinder dry with soil moisture readings on greens and tee surfaces at 0%. In peak season, and despite around-the-clock hand-watering, the course was unplayable with virtually no grass cover. They lost every green and tee, and all their visitor income which was 70% repeat business.

SOLUTION

Irrigation consultants 2ic were appointed in September 2018 to secure a sustainable water supply and design a new system to irrigate the greens, tees and approaches. Following a competitive tender, Archie and the club selected a Rain Bird® IC System™ with Stratus LT™ Central Control.

A potential borehole location had been identified years ago. It was pinpointed by 2ic and successfully drilled, resulting in the availability of 32m³ per hour of water. While no additional mains water is required to irrigate the course, pipe and cable for mains water backup was laid into the same trench in case of borehole pump failure.

That was one of many client-centric solutions delivered by the project team of consultants, contractor and Rain Bird personnel. Power and water were re-routed around the course, and the same trenches used to extend wifi from the clubhouse to the greenkeepers' compound. A new pump station and water tanks were located to the south side of the course with Rain Bird IC CONNECT™ sensor input devices installed, enabling pump performance and water levels to be monitored from the central control. The IC System minimises cable joints reducing potential faults, and Rain Bird suggested conducting sprinkler trials on individual tees, while nozzles were selected for certain areas of the course to ensure optimal uniformity of coverage.

RESULTS

Archie Dunn said: "The difference is night and day. Finally we're able to get the full benefit of the products and sand we apply and getting much quicker results. We began our autumn renovations the first week in August when in previous years we'd have waited until late September or October. We've also received feedback about the improved playability and performance from our members and visitors, which is great for team morale.

The Stratus LT Central Control allows us to monitor and manage the entire system in real-time from anywhere, and with our relatively modest budget I really didn't think that would be possible. I haven't had an automated system in my greenkeeping career so it has been a big change, but I've found it easier to use than I expected. The support and training we've received from Rain Bird and the installation team has been superb, and my deputy and I are looking forward to further fine-tuning over the winter."



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— Archie Dunn, Course Manager

"This was a textbook example of industry experts working together to deliver the very best solutions for the client. From water and electrical engineering to sprinkler selection, system set-up and operator training, the whole team added value to the project and were completely committed to minimising disruption and ensuring the system was ready to hand over on schedule and within budget."

— Phil Langdon • 2ic, Project Consultants