

# **Drax Golf Club**

## Course Development Plan



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## Introduction

The purpose of this document is threefold;

1. To provide a record of the current layout of Drax Golf Club and insight into previous changes.
2. To summarise the Club's aspirations and investment intentions in respect of the Course layout and condition.
3. To support detailed prioritisation and planning of course maintenance and upgrade activity.

This document should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis (at least biannually) to reflect the changes that have occurred and to ensure that priorities are in line with changing expectations.

Going forward, the club will aim to improve communication on course development activity and will notify members of upcoming works prior to commencement where possible. This will be ever changing and sometimes situations and priorities will change to accentuate requirements.

## Aims and Objectives

The quality of our golf course in terms of both CONDITION and LAYOUT is central to the viability of the club. The overarching aim and objective of this proposal of change is to improve the drainage and reduction of trees as our main priority.

Further aims / objectives are key to:

- retain and grow our membership
- attract visitor and corporate numbers
- raise our membership / visitor profile

Currently we have a GOOD Course in a GREAT setting and excellent location for those commuting. We have the site opportunity to build on the great setting and develop a VERY GOOD going on GREAT course. A great course is key to much higher levels of visitor income that we need to aspire.

The improvements in layout will build on the design principles of founder member J. Scott, the course's designer who in the 1990's laid out the basis of the course prior to our extension in 2010. The changes build on the playability of the course but also build on the need for accurate play through attention to strategic tree reduction and improvements to hazards.

The addition of new tees will add an option for member and visitor play as well as providing a good test of golf for the more skilled players who we are trying to attract whilst introducing risk and reward opportunities.

The changes/improvements will allow us to attract good Amateurs to play our course, whether that be through invitation days or our annual Open competitions. Hopefully this activity will further increase the profile of the course and to build our membership and attract visitors.

## History

The course at Drax was opened in 1990 as a 9-hole course, then with the addition in 2010 of 3 new holes that are maturing nicely, it became a 12-hole course that can support a full 18-hole round with ease.

In 2016, the course route was reviewed following a consultation and trial period it was changed from the updated layout in 2010. The chosen route is how the course is currently played going into 2018 but is always reviewable to further improve member and guest/visitors playability.

Although the course is situated adjacent to the country's largest power station, it is set in a very attractive woodland area and during a round you will see a variety of wildlife.

The course is maintained by a team of greenkeepers under the direction of our Head Greenkeeper, who has made great improvements to the course since his arrival in April 2017.

The layout of the course makes it manageable for a beginner, ideal for the casual golfer, but still offers a difficult challenge even for the more skillful players because of its narrow fairways, trees and hazards that make accuracy important.

## Conditioning

Conditioning of the course on a consistent and sustainable basis is important.

We intend to keep up and build on the current excellent maintenance regime, ensure our staff maintain and develop their skills and we provide them with the best green keeping equipment and facilities on a sustainable basis.

There are a very large number of competitor courses for the visitor pounds. The successful ones, such as The Oaks, Selby GC etc. – offering a great course, which is a key element towards much higher levels of visitor income that we need to aspire if we are to maintain our financial sustainability.

Progress has been made over the last 9 months, but we need to plan for the next 12 months, 3 years, and 5 years if we are to achieve our objectives and remain financially viable.



## Greens Staff

Our current small team is working very hard. We will ensure that we build on and enhance their skills and ensure that they have the tools they need to do the job to ensure we are indeed, Yorkshire's Hidden Gem.

### Current Greens Sub-Committee

Member	Role
Mark Sneap	Head Greenkeeper
Matthew Forde	Secretary
Kevin Harrison	Captain 2017
Alan Puddyford	Club Member
Graham Gilson	Club Member
Lee Coates	Club Member

## Course Design, Layout and Action Principles

In enhancing our course from good to very good; or very good to great the guiding principles include:

- Building on the legacy of Drax Golf Club particularly in terms of greens, and improving bunkering, layout balance and length
- Ensuring the course is playable, encouraging accurate shots played at a good pace. This means avoiding penal rough; and instead of repositioning / adding bunkers and run offs / swales
- Reducing the abundance of trees on the course which has been an overarching issue for a number of years
- Building on the quality of the putting surfaces and the drainage (particularly drainage for periods of heavy rainfall)
- Making the course as playable as possible in the winter months - further improve drainage to allow the use of main greens and tees as much as feasible
- Adding more colour around the course to have an aesthetic "wow factor"
- Maintain good quality course hardware - flags, cups, teeing ground equipment etc.

## Course Development Q&A

Members were invited to a dedicated Q&A Session focused around course development. This took place on Tuesday 6th March.

Here at Drax Golf Club, we always aspire to be the best golf club we can. In order to do that, we felt that we needed to engage the members and canvas their opinions to ensure we are all aligned in future projects and development opportunities including course layout.

## Individual Hole Details

### Hole 1

- We aim to make the area around the first tee more of a focal point. To bring this to fruition, we will explore the opportunity to build a new flowerbed to the left of the bench by the tee.
- Once the aforementioned tree is removed, we will be able to look at extending the tee box at the front left to make the tee squarer. In conjunction with this the whole tee will be lifted and levelled.
- Along with other areas of the course, there are a number of mature poplar trees which are between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> holes. We will look to remove/prune this as part of the ongoing tree reduction program.
- After consultation with the Head Greenkeeper, we will remove “The Bush” which is currently situated behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee. The first row of trees that makeup this area will be thinned out and some remain along with the planting of some saplings which are currently behind the 5<sup>th</sup> green, we will be able to shape the tree line behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee and create a more natural dog-leg.
- With “The Bush” removed, there is an opportunity to place a small pot bunker around 20 yards short of this area which would catch any shots heading for the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee box. This should make scoring better for players as they would not need to take relief from “The Bush” under penalty.
- Following the course development Q&A, it was requested that we review the Scottish Pine in front of the first tee. A member asked on behalf of the senior’s section if one of the trees could be removed as they kept hitting it with their tee shot. This will be reviewed and discussed at the next course walk.

### Hole 2

- Following the reduction of trees lining the second fairway in March 2017, air flow is now improved but has seen a change of stroke index from 12 to 14. To counteract this, we will make the tee box an “L shape” which will allow us to move the medal tee left towards the 18<sup>th</sup> hole therefore bringing the right of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole more into play.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> hole has always been our Achilles heel in bad weather. Although a number of drains run across the fairway and down to the ditch running through the heart of the course, the 2<sup>nd</sup> has always retained water in the autumn and winter months. The technique of slitting will become a regular occurrence during these periods to help break up and clay and increase drainage.
- In the forthcoming autumn new drains will be ran to drain the fairway as a major priority as soon as we can get machinery on the course at the close of the season. We may also look to create a swale running the length of the fairway to the right of the hole.



- We all know the 2<sup>nd</sup> green is arguably the toughest on the course with shots tending to run to the back right. With this in mind, we will explore the possibility of slightly extending the green in this area to create a “bowl” affect which will catch misjudged putts.
- The slope from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> tends to be an issue during winter and icy periods. Following our recent grant application from Tesco and Groundworks, we propose that the right of the green is drained and trees cleared with a new path introduced to the 3<sup>rd</sup> tee.

### Hole 3

- Again, drainage has always been an issue on the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole. The first task was to locate and expose all existing drainage outlets into all ponds and ditches that surround the hole. Should this not help the drainage issues, the below will be investigated:
  - New drains will be introduced over the first 100 yards of the hole with outlets leading water to the small pond by the exit of the path to the fairway. An overflow pipe will then run to the first ditch, 20 yards short of the tee box.
  - Along with the above, we will investigate creating a weir between the pond by the exit to the fairway and the large pond to the left, by the 4<sup>th</sup> green which would also be extended towards the bunker.
  - New drains will be put on place over the 2<sup>nd</sup> ditch (190 yards in front of tee) between the ditch and trees. The drains will run into the small pond in the back right corner which will be dug out and renovated. An overflow pipe would then run to the 2<sup>nd</sup> ditch which runs the length of the hole.
  - Additional drains will run into the main ditch along the fairway up to the apron of the green.
  - The small open fairway ditch which runs across the fairway at approx. 150 yards to the green will be piped and filled in.
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> fairway ditch that runs across the fairway at approx. 70 yards to the green will be reinstated as a hazard. To the right of the bridge we will recreate the pond and dig out this area and run drainage into this.
- “The bush” which is a bone of contention for all will be removed. This is based on competition play where players are not following the rules of golf which require lost balls be able to be identified to be entitled a drop. It will also improve the pace of play. The area will be levelled and will also bring into play the 2<sup>nd</sup> ditch more which will catch shots in this area.
- To the right of the fairway, approx. 120 yards to the green, there is a large tree that overhangs the fairway, this will be pruned accordingly.
- Longer serving members will be aware of the number of issues we have previously had with the 3<sup>rd</sup> green which saw it having to be re-laid a number of times during its early years. We know that the lack of air and light is the underlying issue. With this in mind we be removing the large trees to the left of the green and right of the 4<sup>th</sup> tee box and other trees in the surrounding area.



- It was raised during the Q&A session that the Oak Tree's may have a preservation order on them. This will be investigated and decision made accordingly.

#### Hole 4

- The 4<sup>th</sup> is our risk and reward hole. To add a further degree of difficulty, we are proposing that with the reduction of the trees between holes 3 and 4 adjacent to the 4<sup>th</sup> tee, we want to build a new general play tee to add a completely new angle which will force players over the pond.
- The pond itself has fallen into a state of disrepair due to the abundance of bulrush. We are exploring the best method of reducing the number of these plants to help visibility on the hole.
- At the end of the hole, just short of the green, there is a tall tree with an accompanying trunk of a tree which has previously been felled. As for the tree, it is currently leaning at an extreme angle with the possibility it may fall and damage the green. Should the situation worsen, the tree will be felled and we will introduce a bunker in this area.
- The new medal tee box may not be fit for purpose so we will investigate a high quality G4 artificial grass version. This will be subject to cost and progression of the new tee.
- John Leonard advised at the Q&A session that he was currently investigating the possibility of becoming self-sustainable by obtaining grant money to dig and extend the current pond. This would also include any requirement to pump the water to the rest of the course.

#### Hole 5

- The drainage of this hole has again been an underlying issue since it was built. We will therefore add additional drains across the hole to both ditches to the left and right of the hole with the possibility of an open ditch being created to link the two.

#### Hole 6/12

- In a bid to drain the hole some time ago, a pond was dug in the left corner of the hole. Unfortunately, other than the first winter, this pond has never held water. It has now become an unsightly area of the course which is still deemed as a hazard but players cannot determine whether their ball is in the hazard.
- The fairway will be cut slightly differently to enhance the shape of the dogleg. With more fairway being introduced to the left of the hole, and the right of the hole down the side of the trees being left to grow to short rough. In turn, this will make players play further left so that less balls make their way into the trees to the right of the hole. Again, improving pace of play. We will also introduce sign on the tee box encouraging players to play a provisional ball should they go into the trees. We will also introduce a call up procedure as most players are unable to reach the corner where the group in front maybe stood waiting for the green to clear. This will also act as a ball spotting opportunity for miss hit tee shots.



- To further improve drainage on the hole, we are going to be reinstating the open ditch which used to run across the fairway approx. 60 yards short of the green. This ditch will allow us to drain into it as this with this running across both the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> fairways. It will be strategically placed to catch out players on the new tee box who take a challenge of driving over the top of the tall trees on the corner of the dogleg.

### Hole 7/13

- As mentioned above while covering hole 6, we will introduce an open ditch to the 7<sup>th</sup> hole, around 50 yards in front of the tee area which will allow us to further improve drainage in the whole area.
- As there will be a lot of spoil from the groundwork from the ditch, we will utilise this material to extend the 7<sup>th</sup> tee box by pushing the tee right towards the trees. This will give us a larger tee box which will allow more rotation of the general play and ladies tees.
- The right greenside bunker has always held lots of water during heavy rain, therefore a new drainage pipe will be installed from the centre of the bunker to the ditch to the right of the green.
- The left greenside bunker is in much need of repair. The first ¼ of the bunker is unsafe with planks of wood holding up the bank of the fairway. We will therefore reshape this bunker and form two smaller more manageable pot bunkers, which are much more in keeping with current greenkeeping practices.

### Hole 8/14

- We intended to create a mirror image to the left of the green to fulfil the same purpose as the right hand side.

### Hole 9/15

- It has always been an ambition to add length where possible at Drax. With this objective in mind, we are exploring the possibility of pushing back the medal tee into the trees to give us more length. This would be a lot of work including the installation a pipe in the ditch behind the current medal tee. This maybe a longer term project which would also improve airflow over the 7<sup>th</sup> green.
- As mentioned above, with the introduction of the swale between holes 8 and 9, we will be able to drain at minimum the first 100 yards of the hole. To help drain the remaining 250 yards, we will continue the swale across the front of the 9<sup>th</sup> fairway and along the right side of the hole towards the pond. This will allow the installation of a number of drains which are a necessity.
- Over the past 2 years, the water level of the pond has slowly reduced. After an inspection, we have found a tear in the liner which we will repair and refill the pond. As part of this project, the small bushes at the front of the pond will be removed and the whole pond area tidied.
- A member raised a point at the Q&A session that the tee box was uneven whereby if you tee'd upon the left the ball was above your feet and vice-versa.

Mark Sneap advised that we would need to strip the turf, level the tee and relay the turf to rectify. This will be reviewed accordingly.

## Hole 10/16

- The area in front of the 10<sup>th</sup> tee box up to the corner where it meets the 16<sup>th</sup> hole has always held water throughout winter months. We would therefore like to create a pond between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> holes which is currently an area of long grass which will allow us to drain the 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> respectively. An overflow pipe would then run from this pond to the existing moat between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.
- The area in front of the 16<sup>th</sup> tee is another problem area we have highlighted in terms of drainage. We intend on running drainage channels from this area into the ditch which surrounds the front of the practice area and then exits the course.
- To allow us to create a connected fairway between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, we will remove the 2 willow trees on the corner of the 10<sup>th</sup> hole. This will allow the greens staff to join the two fairways together and improve the cut and fairway size and create a visual sweeping dogleg.
- The former 16<sup>th</sup> medal tee has come into a state of disrepair and is now unplayable. We will be going to dismantle this tee box and use the material to build up and raise the existing 16<sup>th</sup> tee to be more in keeping with the rest of the course.
- Due to the fairway on the 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> being on a hill, players on the 16<sup>th</sup> tee cannot see players in the fairway after 200 yards. Therefore we will add a bell around the 150 yard marker to allow players on the 16<sup>th</sup> take their tee shots once the bell has rang. Additional signage will be added to the tee advising players to ring the bell once the fairway is clear.

## Hole 11/17

- To add further length to the course, we will push the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> tee back and incorporate the old winter green on the 7<sup>th</sup> hole to create a new tee. This would mainly be used as a medal tee but would allow greater rotation options for all tees. The existing tee box would be sloped into the top tier of the 7<sup>th</sup> winter green which again would be extended and raised.
- The left of the green currently has 2 bunkers. We will be looking to fill in the front left bunker and create a swelling mound that would run towards the front bunker which would create a bowl affect around the green.



## Hole 18

- Since the removal of the tall tree at the top of the hill in March 2016, players who hit a longer ball have been able to take on the left of the fairway and take on the corner. Moving forward, we will allow the rough to grow more down the left side of the hole but cut the right side of the hole which is now rough as fairway. This will make the hole look more like a dog leg.
- As previously mentioned we would like to add length to the course. The 18<sup>th</sup> is therefore a perfect hole to extend the tee box. By pushing the tee back level with the 6<sup>th</sup> tee, we will have a much tougher, longer hole which gives us two options:
  - a) Keep the hole as a long par 4
  - b) Make the hole a par 5
 } Or both?

The above point of extending the tee would have some effect on the public footpath through the course but we would need to carry out further analysis as to the yardage of average tee shots.

Initial analysis has indicated that the first ditch would have to be piped and filled to give players a chance to lay up, should they wish. We have measured from the ladies 6<sup>th</sup> tee to front of the fairway which measures at 190 yards. This incidentally is the same carry as the ditch on the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole.

- With the reduction of the fairway bunker, we will add a pot bunker to the front left of the green which would catch any short shots as the green also slopes backwards towards this area.

## Hole 0/Charity Hole

- Our practice area, also known as 'hole 0' has an abundance of possibilities whether that includes incorporating this area into the course as a new hole.
- Using the spoil from the 8<sup>th</sup> swale, we will build up the old tee area to the back of the 9<sup>th</sup> green. This will be raised to around 3ft and built as a dedicated tee box.
- The green itself does require some work to bring it put to scratch with the rest of the greens on the course. This will take time but is achievable so long as we incorporate it into the day to day maintenance of the course.
- The pond in front of the green will be filled in and a pot bunker put in its place.
- The green would be slightly extended to the left towards the existing bunkers.
- A further bunker would be created to the right of the green to catch any stray shots heading out of bounds.



## Completed Work as at 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018

### Hole 1

- Information board is to be moved from its existing position near the old 1<sup>st</sup> Medal tee to the side of the 1<sup>st</sup> tee box (old 10<sup>th</sup>) and renovated.
- Unfortunately the roots of the memorial tree planted by the first tee are starting to encroach to the tee box. With this in mind we will as permission from Dale Banks for this tree to be felled with a replacement planted elsewhere on the course in memory of his father and founder member, Dennis.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> fairway is currently cut in such a way that it is positioned more towards the old 1<sup>st</sup> tee, now the practice putting green. The greens staff will therefore change the cutting angle and swoop the fairway more towards the new 1<sup>st</sup> tee box.

### Hole 2

- Again there are a number of trees that we have earmarked for removal. This will give players a better opportunity to reach the green.
- All existing drainage outlets will be found and rodded to clear any blockages.

### Hole 3

- The first task is to locate and expose all existing drainage outlets into all ponds and ditches that surround the hole.

### Hole 4

- Earlier in the year a new medal tee was built and we will reinstate this for the 2018 season.
- The existing general play tee has never been hardwearing and is one of the few tees on the course which isn't raised. To help with wearing, we will create a new tee box to the right of the existing position which will allow us to rotate more thus easing the strain.
- There is an area of long grass in front of the tee box which stretches to the right 150 marker. This long grass is becoming unsightly so will be cut as shorter rough.
- Along with the above, the area of long grass to the left of the hole will also be cut short therefore speeding up pace of play.
- Drainage again will be reviewed with the ditch between holes 4 and 5 dug out and drainage outlets exposed. Small self-set trees will also be removed along this area at the same time.
- The old tree stump by the green has become unsightly due to the growth of new stems, these will be trimmed back to the stump itself.



## Hole 5

- Along with hole 4, we will reinstate the recently rebuilt medal tee by the 2018 season.
- The drainage of this hole has again been an underlying issue since it was built. We will therefore add new drainage channels to the area leaving the hole.

## Hole 6/12

- In 2008/2009, new drainage was installed around the 6<sup>th</sup> tee boxes. Unfortunately, a number of years later this area again is causing an issue with standing water. We will therefore locate all existing drains and clear along with the introduction of new drains to help with the ongoing issue. We are not exactly sure as to what extent we will need to drain this area but we will complete one section and then review accordingly.
- The above drainage will create a large amount of spoil which we will need to find a new location for. In previous winters we have placed winter tees by the memorial tree to protect the area between holes 11 and 12. We will build a prominent tee in this area using the spoil that can be used as a winter tee or a new tee box for the 12<sup>th</sup> hole. This would give us a brand new hole measuring in excess of 300 yards. Should we introduce this tee box as the new 12<sup>th</sup>, it would also reduce the hold ups caused by sharing the same tee.
- In a bid to drain the hole some time ago, a pond was dug in the left corner of the hole. Unfortunately, other than the first winter, this pond has never held water. It has now become an unsightly area of the course which is still deemed as a hazard but players cannot determine whether their ball is in the hazard. This area has been cut down and the pond will be filled in and leveled. This will allow the greens staff to cut this area as rough, thus improving the pace of play.
- Tree removal will be completed to the right of the hole, especially surrounding the green where one tree in particular is becoming an issue due to its protruding roots towards the green.

## Hole 7/13

- Tree work again is a necessity on the 7<sup>th</sup> hole. Large clumps of trees to the right and left of the slope and greenside will be pruned and some trees strategically felled.

## Hole 8/14

- Dubbed as our signature hole, the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> has become increasingly narrow in recent years making the tee shot from the back tee more difficult for a number of players. To help with this, a number of trees down both sides of the slope will be pruned and felled to widen the gap.
- Drainage again is an issue on this hole, especially to the right of the green towards the 9<sup>th</sup> fairway where standing water has been a problem for many years. We will therefore create a swale running from the back of the 8<sup>th</sup> green down past the bell and into the main ditch which runs through the heart of the course. Additional

drainage will run into the swale to carry water away from the greenside bunkers and surrounding areas.

- As part of the above, the right greenside bunker will need to be reshaped which will in turn allow us to create a run off area to the back right of the green. This will require a tough chip back onto the green should players find themselves in this area and make the maintenance of the whole area more manageable.

### Hole 9/15

- As some members will remember, the bunker situated between the pond and green used to be two bunkers but was joined together some years ago. After observation, we have found that the right side doesn't actually come into play that often, therefore the size of the bunker will be halved which will save time in terms of maintenance and cost of replacement sand.

### Hole 18

- The 18<sup>th</sup> is the only hole on the course with a fairway bunker. However, around 30% of the bunker is situated within the tree line which doesn't give players a shot towards the green. Therefore this area of the bunker will be filled in.



## Versions

Version	Date	Author	Comments
v1-00	10/12/2017	Liam Ridgill	Initial Document
v1-01	05/03/2018	Liam Ridgill	Review of completed work since initial document and update to individual hole details.

