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THE EUROPEAN GOLF ASSOCIATION GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE

10-STEP GUIDELINE TOWARDS PROTECTING, ENHANCING AND RESTORING BIODIVERSITY ON GOLF COURSES

The European Golf Association Golf Course Committee (EGA GCC) brings together a wide range of actors representing the golfing industry. The EGA GCC and its members firmly believe that golf can contribute significantly to protecting, enhancing and restoring biodiversity through implementation of best practices in the development and management of golf courses. In this context, the EGA GCC proposes the following 10-step guideline, which is designed to provide an overarching framework complementing and facilitating access to existing guidance on best practice.

1. At concept, appreciate the need to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity in course development and management.
2. Engage with environmental non-governmental organisations, regulatory authorities and local conservation groups to optimise biodiversity.
3. Before commencing planning, undertake habitat and wildlife audits to establish a benchmark.
4. Ensure that policies are in place to protect existing biodiversity and make every effort to restore desirable habitat and enhance what is already there.
5. Minimise habitat fragmentation and maximise connectivity, utilising corridors for wildlife movement across sites where appropriate.
6. Be aware of environmental protected designations and your responsibility towards their preservation and management.
7. During construction, monitor the impact of development on biodiversity.
8. Post-construction, implement management practices that will build on biodiversity, avoiding practices that might impact adversely on habitats and species, or that might compromise ecosystem integrity.
9. Carry out further habitat and wildlife audits at regular intervals and consider participation in an environmental certification programme to determine your success in promoting biodiversity.
10. Communicate your policy for biodiversity to local interest groups and other agencies, e.g. environmental non-governmental organisations and regulatory bodies.

As is evident in the guideline, the EGA GCC encourages dialogue and cooperation between non-governmental organisations, regulatory authorities and local conservation groups so as to optimise biodiversity. As such, the EGA GCC would welcome comments on this guideline from stakeholders.

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Useful references, programmes and resources

English Golf Union (EGU)

The EGU, supported by Natural England, The R&A and STRI, provided some 220 golf clubs with ecological and environmental advice, backed by certification for achieving set targets for environmental improvement.

www.englishgolfunion.org

French Golf Federation (ffg) and French Greenkeepers Association (AGREF)

The ffg and AGREF work closely on golf and environmental matters. They promote biodiversity and are working with the French National Natural History Museum to thoroughly audit the wildlife at the Golf National near Paris.

www.ffgolf.org and www.agref.org

German Golf Association (DGV)

The “Golf und Natur” programme provides golf facilities with a guidance system for integrated golf course management so they can implement policies to demonstrate that golf and nature can co-exist.

www.golf.de/dgv/umweltprogramm

Golf Environmental Organization (GEO)

GEO is an international non-profit NGO working to enhance the economic, social and environmental benefits of golf. GEO places a high priority on the protection and enhancement of ecosystems and biodiversity, through its guidelines and the criteria for its recognition programmes.

www.golfenvironment.org

Scandinavian Turfgrass and Environment Research Foundation (STERF)

STERF was established and is supported by all of the Nordic golf federations. The research and development work completed by STERF is intended to lead to improvements in golf course quality, as well as environmental and economic gains.

www.sterf.golf.se

Scottish Golf Union (SGU) and Scottish Golf Environment Group (SGEG)

SGEG is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Scottish Golf Union Limited, supported by Scottish Natural Heritage and The R&A. It offers advice to affiliated clubs on a wide range of environmental issues, both on and off the course, leading to Scottish Golf Environment Certificates.

www.sgeg.org.uk and www.scottishgolf.org

Swedish Golf Federation (SGF)

The SGF provides advice on environmental stewardship for golf clubs based on a self-regulating programme for environmentally regulated activities.

www.golf.se/SGF

The R&A

Based in St Andrews, The R&A is golf's governing body and organiser of The Open Championship. It recognises golf's responsibility to the environment and offers guidelines on best practice to ensure that playing quality, economic performance and social responsibility are in balance with environmental stewardship.

www.bestcourseforgolf.org