



A recent bunker installation at Stoke Park (and right)

‘BREXIT under construction’

John Greasley is one of the UK's largest golf course contractors and is regularly commissioned to carry out projects on golf courses in Europe. Here, an opinion is given of how leaving the EU may affect business, both in Britain and overseas

Confidence is a key factor; providing clients and governments hold their nerve then markets are likely to stay pretty stable over the next few years. Following the negotiation it is taking everyone into unknown territory and therefore impossible to predict what lies ahead. In the end it may be that ‘confidence’ will be a significant factor to what happens over the coming years. Regardless of the outcome of the Brexit negotiations it is hoped that common sense prevails and we can live with the terms of obtaining / negotiating a trade deal which allows companies like ours to operate within Europe without the restriction of trade barriers and tariffs.

We are a flexible and mobile company and over the years we have worked in France, Belgium, Denmark and Cyprus. With the availability of excellent European road / freight haulage companies, we have found it remarkably easy and cost effective to move our specialist equipment around. This along with the willingness of our staff to embrace working abroad,

allows us to be ‘self-contained’ when carrying out foreign contracts. A large number of overseas clients also prefer to purchase materials directly which enables us to avoid setting up foreign accounts, taking on exchange rate risks and currency conversions.

The majority of our projects are carried out in the UK, however we have ventured overseas for a number of reasons. Firstly we enjoy a challenge and the interesting projects that often come up abroad. Working abroad involves a lot of forward planning from the initial logistics of mobilising men and machinery through to sourcing materials and other resources. We are normally in the fortunate position of working with helpful and amenable clients or course managers who are willing to help pass on their local knowledge and contacts.

Having been sponsors of the EIGCA (European Institute of Golf Course Architects) for the last 15 years, we have built up strong links with its members and offer to them a reliable

contracting ability to carry out both new build and refurbishment works using our own skilled labour and directly owned plant.

The immediate benefit to our continental clients has been the fall in the pound which makes us considerably more competitive than we have been over recent years. This coupled with record low interest rates and higher residual values for plant when sold overseas, means there are a number of plus factors that will help ensure the ‘confidence’ key is maintained for the next few years.

On the potential negative side there is the possibility of a self-inflicted recession. This coupled with uncertainty with the currency exchange rates may make for a bumpy ride ahead!

There will undoubtedly be a significant increase in administration for the registration of workers, obtaining visas / work permits, import levies, higher taxes, registration fees and VAT requirements.

At present we have a strong and healthy UK and European client base and would like that to continue irrespective of us being in or out of the EU!

“The fall in the pound makes us more competitive than we have been. [But] uncertainty with the currency exchange rates may make for a bumpy ride ahead”

RECENT PROJECTS

In the UK we are pleased to present a summary of projects that we have completed or are ongoing.

Stoke Park GC. HyLine project with IMPACT. During the autumn / winter of 2015, we have reconstructed, drained and lined all bunkers on the front ‘Colt’ nine holes. Working with estate manager, Alex Miller and director of golf, Stuart Collier, the bunkers have been rebuilt primarily in the same locations as before with adjustments made to sand lines and surrounds mound work to increase the visual impact and challenge.

The course lies on a Hoggin subsoil material which causes significant problems with stones migrating into the bunker sand. Stoke Park chose our



proprietary ‘HyLine’ to be installed as a fundamental part of the project to ensure stone-free and consistent bunkering. New internal and external drainage was installed at the same time, along with the installation of a ‘stacked turf edge’. The surrounds were turfed using County Greenscape turf which was a good match with the existing sward. RH37 bunker sand was installed at an average depth of 75mm.

Works were completed at the end of March 2016, with the bunkers returned to play at the end of April. The feedback from members has been exceptional and they cannot wait for the next phase to be completed. Works to the back nine are due to commence this autumn.

Royal St George’s GC. Iconic 4th bunkers were re-shaped in January 2016. The club decided that the collapsed sleeper structure required replacing whilst retaining the outline of the dunes and imposing sand line. It was decided to go with a natural solution using translocated dune vegetation using 1.20m x 1.20m slabs that were harvested from an adjacent dune destined to be an open sand ecology habitat.

Hartley Wintney GC – ‘Core Out’ greens reconstruction.

After successfully tendering for these works we were engaged by Hartley Wintney to reconstruct five problematic greens during August / September 2015. The club had been suffering with winter closures of these greens due to the old push up style construction and poor drainage properties. Rather than going for the potential short term option of simply draining the heavy soil based greens, the club decided that the best solution

was to reconstruct the putting surface by way of ‘coring out’ and re-building to the USGA style. In order to keep the new greens consistent with the remaining greens we carefully stripped the existing turf using a professional turf cutter and laid this out on polythene for relaying upon completion of the rootzone replacement. A perimeter strip of collar turf was stripped to enable the new surface to be married in to the existing levels.

In principal, USGA ‘core out’ construction involves excavating the putting surface area to a depth of 400mm with this material used to create feature moundwork around the course within the roughs. The club was conscious to keep the putting surface contours as close as possible to the original, however it took the opportunity to remove any low spots that previously trapped surface water and soften one or two aggressive features to increase the pinnable areas. A herringbone drainage system was installed at 5m centres, overlaid with 100mm depth of 2-6mm gravel carpet. The club, under the guidance of Bruce Jamieson, opted to use a 90/10 rootzone out of the Kingsley quarry, Hampshire. This was supplied and laid to a firmed depth of 300mm.

As a specialist contractor, it really is a matter of keeping one’s head down, continuing to complete works efficiently to the highest of standards and maintaining ‘confidence’.

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