



## Portmore Golf Park, Devon

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**Relevant links:**

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**Overview**

Portmore Golf Park is located near Barnstaple in North Devon and has both 9 and 18 hole courses. Transformed from a dairy farm in 1993, it is a small, family run business which has strong sustainability objectives.

Colin Webber, owner and site manager, has long considered the impacts of weather and longer term climatic trends, ever since the 1987 'hurricane'. Although the following 10 years were relatively 'normal', Colin has since started to notice increasingly heavier and more frequent rainfall events, as well droughts. Keen to ensure that his golf course is able to be played on year-round and to make the most of resources, Colin built in measures to manage water sustainably right from the start.

Colin started by talking to other greenkeepers to learn from their experiences. In making the golf park as sustainable as possible, sourcing water was a major problem, as he did not want to use boreholes or mains water for watering the greens. By talking to other businesses, as well as organisations such as Business Link, the Environment Agency and Envision, Colin has succeeded in making Portmore Golf Park almost self-sufficient in its water-use; winning environmental awards and making huge cost-savings along the way.



### Climate change adaptation actions

- Lakes were constructed in order to catch rainwater and surface water run-off, both reducing the chances of waterlogging on site and providing a source of water for the irrigation system during dry spells. These lakes also form a feature of the golf course.
- Implemented rainwater harvesting systems in the club buildings, allowing the use of rainwater for flushing toilets and washing golf balls used in the driving range. The water is collected in tanks, which feed the ball-washing machine, with the overflow running into the old farm well so that the water level continues to be topped-up. This was done in June 2009 and it was so simple and easy to do that Colin is annoyed he did not do it earlier!
- Rainwater caught on the workshop roof is used for producing organic liquid feeds. By using pure water, heavy metals are prevented from contaminating the greens and this is helping Portmore move towards becoming one of the world's first organic golf courses.
- The site was landscaped in such a way to improve the environment for wildlife. By leaving large areas of rough, creating 9 lakes and wet areas, managing woodland, reducing to the absolute minimum the use of pesticides and fertilisers the numbers of different species have increased at an amazing rate. There are now a number of mammal, bird, insect, fish and reptile species including; Deer, Badgers, Foxes, Otters, King Fishers, Herons, Dragonflies, Barn Owls, Little Owls, Kestrels, Buzzards, Woodpeckers, Ducks and various Butterflies, all of which were not evident when the site was a highly productive Dairy Farm.

Portmore golf park is also implementing a range of wider sustainability actions that help to mitigate climate change by reducing their carbon emissions. These actions include; energy-efficient lighting; electric golf-buggies and using biodiesel in the lawn-mowers. Colin is also looking at switching to the mowers to electric, using photovoltaic cells to charge them.

### Benefits of adapting

- The water efficiency measures have helped to keep the greens alive during periods of droughts – they would almost certainly have been lost without these.
- Cost-savings
  - 75% reduction on water bill
  - £30 – 35,000 savings per year on maintenance of the courses – now only costs around £6000 per year
  - 40% reduction on electricity bill due to energy-saving measures
- More resilient to the negative effects of wet summers – the savings made mean that the business is not so affected by a drop in customer numbers due to bad weather.
- Although the course still sometimes suffers from water-logging, the storage lakes and drainage are improving this. Increasing the amount of air in the soil and using more compost is also helping to get water off of the playing surfaces.
- The sustainability measures are increasing the club's reputation and beginning to attract more customers. The club has been awarded a number of environmental awards including being one of only 50 clubs to receive The English Golf Environment Award in recognition of their commitment to ecological good practice – an award decided by Natural England, English Golf Union, Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI), and R & A (golf's governing body). Colin is also planning to apply to the Soil Association for organic certification.



## Recommendations

- Get help and advice, there is lots available. Colin says that Business Link were superb at finding out information, including on financial support and local suppliers of products/services. For example, Business Link were able to identify a local supplier for the club's environmentally friendly cleaning products. Government tax breaks (which Business Link supplied information on) have also meant that Portmore has not had to pay tax on any of the efficiency measures that have been introduced
- Get an audit carried out on your business to establish your carbon footprint. Envision did this for Portmore, highlighting where energy was being used and really challenging Colin to implement measures, spurring him on.