



Nature: Tree and Shrub Planting - The Glen Golf Club

THE CHALLENGE

The Glen golf course had previously seen various phases of planting, some of which had been successful, and others which had failed to develop – primarily due to the highly exposed location. The Glen Golf Club felt further planting would be beneficial to the course by providing:

- Increased character and challenge to holes through greater definition.
- More shelter from easterly and westerly winds.
- Increased coastal 'links' character on the more inland holes.

The club wished to avoid:

- Over-planting the course which would obscure views and detract from the dominant openness of the site.
- Planting further pure conifer blocks which were a management headache and added an unnatural and 'man made' feature to an otherwise stunning, open and rugged landscape.
- Planting too close to the cliff-top and shoreline where the rough grassland was much finer in texture and botanically rich.



Prior to planting the more inland section of the course was open, with large patches of coarse, heavy grassland (Yorkshire fog, False oat-grass, Cocks-foot etc). There was an opportunity to increase the definition of many of these holes, whilst at the same time define a more "coastal" character for them through appropriate planting of native shrubs.



Post gorse planting



A typical view of the coastline. Notice the existing “forestry” style plantations of lodgepole pine to the inland side of the course.

THE SOLUTION

A planting programme was designed, based on the creation of several new ‘structural’ copses of a ‘coastal’ character. These would be dominated by large outcrops of gorse around the margins, with proportionately smaller cores of Scots pine, rowan, hawthorn, blackthorn, and scattered holly and sycamore throughout.

Some of these copses would adjoin existing isolated and fragmented plantations. By increasing their size and at the same time naturalising their shape and appearance, the new planting would enhance these older plantations and improve their “landscape fit”. The new planting around the fringes would also act as an insurance against the sudden losses of older plantation trees through disease or wind throw.

Overall the scheme involved:

- Planting of native trees and shrubs in areas of species poor, rank, agricultural grassland.
- Planting around existing lodgepole pine and sea buckthorn plantations to add diversity and enable future management / re-structuring of these.
- Creation of loose hedgerows around inland boundary of course to add shelter, definition to holes and assist in intercepting surface runoff from neighbouring fields.
- Avoided planting closer to the beach and cliff-top, where grasslands are species rich (kidney vetch, thrift, primrose, cowslip, etc)
- Removal of old, unsuccessful and inappropriate planting from certain parts of the course.

THE OUTCOME

The planting adds definition and a “tightening” to many holes, and will assist in breaking up the course whilst adding to its coastal character. Those inland holes which maintained something of an open, ‘agricultural’ landscape character will increasingly become more intriguing and atmospheric.

In ecological terms, the plantations add a whole new range of habitat niches for wildlife. Although the heavy grasslands were of interest to small mammals and feeding kestrel, the course will now appeal to a far greater range of species.

The outcrops of scrub will increase the area of, and better connect, the existing available breeding habitat for declining species such as whitethroat, linnet, yellowhammer, bullfinch and stonechat. More cover will be attractive to grey partridge and brown hare.



The planting is dominated by coastal scrub in the form of European gorse (Ulex europaeus). This is accompanied by strategically positioned clusters of Scots pine, and fleshed out with rowan, hawthorn and blackthorn. Some holly and sycamore is scattered throughout the compartments.



The rough grass within the plantation is cut and collected in these areas 2-3 times a year and scarified once as part of the clubs overall rough management strategy to promote finer grasses, the grass was cut just prior to this photo being taken.

Overall, the Course Manager is happy with the progress these areas are now making and future progress monitoring is underway. Some supplementary gorse planting has been undertaken and further planting is scheduled for winter 2010.