



Creating an equitable buggy policy

Guidance to help you review your existing policy and decision making

Advantages of a policy showing reasonable adjustments

- Compliance with legislation
- Showing positive action to your members
- Reduced risk and liability to the company/club
- Increases the value of your annual membership – more opportunities to play
- Maintains the habit of disabled and older golfers – increasing the rate of retention
- Opportunity to offer golf to visitors more of the time

How should you approach creating an equitable buggy policy?

Each policy will be bespoke to your club and based on your course, topography and resources currently available to the club

This approach is for use by a club during general play.

1. Review your existing policy

- Does it identify the difference between general buggy use and disabled people requiring a buggy?
- Is this policy currently available to members?
- When did you last update this?



If you are currently blanket banning all buggy use during the winter then you could be in breach of the Equality Act

2. Do your research

- Do you know how many members currently require a buggy in order to play?
- Do you know how many members may require a buggy in order to play in the next 3 or 5 years?

70% of the disabled people in England are aged 50 plus, consider the average age of your membership and the impact that it could have on you

3. Understand your ground conditions

- What areas have been identified as risks in your course management plan?
- What plans do you have in place to manage these areas of risk?
- How do your greenstaff get around the course during bad conditions?

Look at routes used by greenstaff that could be utilised by players to safely get around. Consider how your course planning includes work to improve areas of risk or improve access for buggies

4. Seek advice

- Consider what reasonable adjustments that you could make
- Look at examples that other clubs have implemented
- Speak to your England Golf Club Support officer

Important - You must always seek your own independent legal advice on your proposed policy before implementing

5. Inform and consult

- Speak to your members through a forum to explain what impact the new policy will have
- Listen to their feedback and consider this in your improvement plan

6. Review and improve

- Ensure that discussions on this are minuted in meetings
- Ensure that the policy has set review dates



What adjustments and changes could we make?

Designated routes

You may have areas on the course where waterlogging occurs or due to the gradient of slopes that it would be unsafe to operate a buggy. Putting in a marked route for buggy and even trolley use can help you minimise the damage to areas of the course and ensure that buggy users only use areas that have been deemed safe, thus reducing the risk of any accidents.

Routes can change throughout the week or every other week to give areas of stress some relief. These can be on existing routes used by greenkeepers to get around the course or through the rough to the sides of each hole.

You can also hold golfers accountable for where they use their buggy on the course where there are designated routes and they can work with you in ensuring that the course can be open for longer.

90 degree rule

You can instruct players that need access to the course using a buggy to get to their ball to do so by entering and exiting the fairway at a 90 degree angle.

Essentially this is to ensure that only buggies that need to be on the course are and that they do so causing the least amount of stress to the course by entering and exiting in a straight line from the designated buggy route.

You may consider colour coding those using buggies with green flags or stickers for those who are allowed on to the course and yellow for those that are only allowed on designated routes.

Reduced loops / Traffic light course conditions

You could offer reduced loops or number of holes by the state of the course conditions. Following the full risk assessment of the course this could identify holes that could be opened in wet/winter conditions.

For example you could include a traffic light system to explain which holes are open to disabled players requiring a buggy in order to play

- Red – 4 holes open 12, 14, 17 and 18
- Amber – 11 holes open 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 18
- Green – All holes open



Doing this will allow you to offer golf to those affected by any buggy restrictions whilst also managing the stresses to your course. It can require some thought on how to manage the priority on tees.

As this is a function for members in general play then some simple steps such as managing the number players in a group or giving priority to those that reach the tee box first and that all players maintain a good pace of play.

Dry course / composite course

If you have two courses at your club you could consider a composite course, which may be referred to as a dry course in order to offer 18 holes of golf.

As long as both courses have been rated then you can create a scorecard for this course in order to offer competitions on this during the winter.

Shorter format for competition

If your club does not already, you could include 9 hole competitions in your calendar of events for members.

Some members may be willing to use a trolley or carry rather than a buggy for 9 holes which would reduce the amount of stress on the course.

Remember that you may wish to include designated routes for trolley use too.

You do not just have to implement all of these but you can implement a combination. For example, having a reduced loop of 7 holes with designated routes.



Impact of change

Trentham Park Golf Club, Staffordshire identified that their policy was not legally robust and wanted to ensure the club was protected and that the club was providing value to the members who require the use of a buggy.

Club consulted England Golf and an initial policy was created which incorporated both designated routes for buggy users and also a traffic light system.

The club presented the change to their members and held a members forum which also included the greenstaff, golf professional and committee members to raise questions and gain answers.

The committee being presented allowed them to see the number of members who would benefit from this and made their commitment to increasing the access to golfers requiring buggies during adverse conditions.

- Winter of 2017/18 saw the course completely closed for 28 days compared to 26 in the following year.
- Red and amber status has been the most commonly used
- Since the initial policy was created both red and amber status conditions have been extended by the construction of a path, allowing a two additional holes to be part of these
- Members have used the course more than the previous year
- All those using a buggy were retained in membership from 2017 in to 2018
- Another linking path on hole 3 to 4 is to be added in 2018 as part of the clubs ongoing commitment to providing more golf to more of their members
- The club has also started work on a new shelter for more buggies to be stored on site to improve the member experience



Oakleaf Golf Club, Durham is a local council run facility that had been challenged around its buggy policy. On taking advice from England Golf the facility recognised its need to put in place a more robust and transparent policy for disabled people requiring a buggy in order to play.

The club updated their policy to distinguish between buggy use and buggy use by disabled people. Following a full assessment of the course the club instigated options for buggy users over 15, 11 and 9 holes, depending on the conditions.

The club record each day in a folder, available for all members the risk assessment carried out and the number of holes that are open on that day.

Despite a challenging winter where the course was closed an additional 57 days over the winter (2017/18) than the previous year, extra works were undertaken to mark out of a designated buggy route around the course and alterations to the footpath and fencing, allowing a safe route from the 16th back to the 1st tee when a reduced 9 hole course was in operation.

This allowed play on 75 more days than the previous year for buggy users where they may otherwise have been banned altogether.

The change in policy has also seen 3 members re-join the club, feeling that they are receiving all the benefits of being a full member.

You can contact the Governance Team by [email](#) or on 01526 354 500