

# The precious commodity

Given the ever-increasing role a lack of water plays as a symbol of global warming, it is not a good idea to waste it on the wash pad. So recycle it, says **David Mears**



*Course Care equipment (from left to right) at Canford School, Castleknock and Sleaford Golf Club*

IT IS INCREASINGLY apparent that environmental issues and water conservation are being taken more seriously at many golf courses and sports grounds as anti-pollution and conservation measures are encouraged. Irrigation usually springs to mind as water management is considered, but so much water is also unnecessarily wasted on the wash pad. As far as wash-off of golf and turf maintenance machinery is concerned, all new installations must be built to prevent pollution and to ensure compliance with The Groundwater Regulations 1998. Many courses and grounds are now reviewing their current facilities, which a number consider woefully inadequate, and are approaching companies such as my own for help to upgrade or rebuild facilities and meet the demands of legislation. The following, having declared an interest, is offered in good faith and as to how to proceed with a new or upgraded washpad.

The main priority to consider is to prevent wash-off water going to ground, entering drains or a watercourse and causing pollution. The solution is to build a 'dedicated' washpad on which all wash-off should take place. The area will vary depending on the size of the course, the number of machines to be washed and how many together. Say you need provision for two machines side by side; a pad between six and eight metres wide and five to six metres deep should suffice. This should have a low curb surround to prevent washings leaving the pad. This, preferably round-topped curb, should be around 40mm high except where machines enter where a height of 25mm is usually sufficient to prevent water escaping

but allow greens' machines and the like to access the pad without damage. To alleviate the problem of standing water, the pad should incorporate a slope to the back where, rather than a standard drain, a grass trap/sand filter would be preferable. This allows only the contaminated water out rather than grass clippings, sand, debris and so on. The water leaving the pad should then enter either; a Class 1 separator (interceptor) prior to discharge to soakaway, drain or watercourse (usually requiring a consent to discharge), or a water recycling system.

The advantages of a recycling system are that, unlike separators, water is not wasted; it is biologically treated and recycled. As water is becoming an expensive commodity, this could well be an important point. Here in the UK, whilst a Class 1 separator is deemed acceptable (at present), it is not considered 'future proof'. This is why many golf courses and others in grounds care are going for recycling. Recycling systems are also allowed in drought areas, permitting regular wash-off.

There is a choice of recycling systems with three predominant brands being generally available. All treat wash water with micro-organisms turning it into clean water for rewashing but there is a distinct difference between types. Most are sited above ground in large containers/cabinets, taking up valuable washpad space and may be considered vulnerable to damage or vandalism. One system, ClearWater, is below ground with few moving parts and less to go wrong. This silent system is not intrusive and

is visually attractive, while offering safe water storage and allaying vandalism fears. Storage of wastewater below ground has always been the standard and the Environment Agency knows of no plans to change this, so installation of a below ground system could be considered the preferred option. However, the choice is yours and those wishing to go down the recycling route should visit sites with different installations, see, smell and listen to the various systems in operation and ask questions:

- How much maintenance time has to be spent each day/week and how easy is it?
- What is the annual cost of micro-organisms?
- What is the running cost in electricity?
- Is there a service agreement and how much does it cost?
- Is the system noisy and would this be a problem?
- Do I need to lay more concrete pad to incorporate the system?
- Does the system have to be sited inside a container?
- How much does the system cost?
- Do I have to have a 'standard' package or is layout/specification flexible?
- Can it be used all year round?
- Does the supplying company provide full installation and washpad build, and at what cost?

A good sales pitch may well impress but there's nothing better than listening to the folk who use washpad recycling systems daily!

Water is an increasingly precious commodity and washpad recycling is a responsible choice. **GCM**

*David Mears is MD of Course Care*