

Question from Paul Boyle to the Lead Member for Leisure:

I have raised this issue in writing multiple times over the past 3 years but do not believe the danger of flying golf balls on Rickmansworth Golf Course is being taken seriously.

Playing from Tee 11 there is significant danger to players walking up the fairway of hole 7. Often they cannot be seen by players from the 11th tee, and they will not be aware of balls potentially coming towards them from tee 11. Being hit by a golf ball could be life threatening and/ or cause serious injury.

When this issue was initially raised by myself 3 years ago work was supposed to have (1) realigned tee 11 to encourage players to hit the ball away from the 7th fairway , and (2) consider planting trees or erect a fence to the right of tee 11. The tee was relaid but no change in direction was made. No trees or fence have been erected.

The hole is in my opinion seriously dangerous and an accident will happen at some stage. It is not IF but WHEN.

I have suggested on multiple occasions to employ a professional course designer who can provide a risk assessment of this potential danger. This would then conclude the matter either way.

This suggestion has been ignored by TRDC who control the golf course. Until this professional risk assessment has taken place I believe TRDC are negligent in providing a suitable safety sporting facility to the public.

1. Why has TRDC allowed this dangerous facility to remain open when it has potential to cause serious harm (potentially fatal) to its public who use it?
2. Why has a professional written risk assessment not taken place?
3. Why is no record kept of “near misses” at Rickmansworth Golf Club?

Written response:

Rickmansworth Golf Course is not a dangerous facility. There have been no recorded or reported accidents or incidents that would provide any support for such a statement.

Originally part of the Moor Park Estate, the course was designed by famous architect Harry Shapland Colt. In 1937, Rickmansworth Urban District Council purchased the site from Moor Park Golf Club and opened it up to the general public.

In 2000, with the aid of a Lottery Sports Award, Three Rivers District Council redeveloped the course, lengthening it to include a par five hole and increasing the Par to 65 for men and 63 for women.

A landscaped short game practice area for pitching, putting and chipping was also included and an extensive programme of lessons was developed and the popular

par three course, known as “Little Ricky”, was made more challenging. Rickmansworth Golf Course layout has not changed in at least 24 years.

Despite the factual data indicating no accidents or near misses have occurred at Rickmansworth golf course, on 8 December 2020, officers, councillors and managers from Everyone Active met with Mr Boyle at Rickmansworth Golf Course to discuss the concerns that he had and to discuss whether there could be some reasonable changes that could be made to address those perceived concerns. Further guidance was sought from the manager and owner of the green-keeping company, who undertake work on behalf of Everyone Active, on which steps could reasonably be actioned.

Following those meetings, officers provided an update, via email dated 17 February 2021, which advised the actions that the Council and Everyone Active had agreed to progress. These were set out as:

- Reconfiguration of the yellow tee, on the 11th hole, to bring the tee box over to the right, as discussed at your site meeting
- Repositioning of the bunker on the 11th fairway to add protection to those on the 12th which is behind the 11th
- Additional trees to be planted along both sides of the 11th fairway near to the 6th and 12th tees to provide some further coverage for those on the adjacent holes
- Signage on the 1st tee regarding golfers having their own insurance
- Sign on the 6th tee to warn of golfers on the 11th

All of the agreed actions have been completed. It is a fact that actions were identified, agreed by all parties, and have been implemented.

On the 4 September 2024, Officers responded to Mr Boyle to state that the correspondence from Mr Boyle on the 29 August 2024 did not raise or highlight anything that had not already been dealt with through the previously agreed actions.