

# The Greening of Golf

An aerial photograph of a golf course. The foreground shows a large, well-maintained green fairway with a sand trap on the left. A golfer is visible in the distance on the right. The background features rolling hills and a winding waterway under a cloudy sky.

**Why biodiversity matters on golf courses**

**What you can do to sustain and enhance it**

**Keith Duff**



GOLF

**“NO OTHER GAME  
COMBINES THE  
WONDER OF  
NATURE WITH  
THE DISCIPLINE  
OF SPORT IN  
SUCH CAREFULLY  
PLANNED WAYS.  
A GREAT GOLF  
COURSE BOTH  
FREES AND  
CHALLENGES  
A GOLFER’S MIND.”**

**- TOM WATSON**

**What's my interest?**



**“Golf is an  
environmental  
disaster”**



**Golf is an  
environmental  
disaster - ????**



**Over 100 SSSIs**

**Over 50 SACs**

**In England**



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## Lizard orchid

- 2000 – 3000 at Royal St Georges
- 90% of whole UK population
- Up to 1m tall
- **Pride in stewardship of national rarity**





**Corridors  
and  
Stepping  
Stones**



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# Birds and golf courses: a guide to habitat management

Faith Chitt and Nigel Byrnes



## R&A – RSPB Partnership

Marie Athorn



Email Marie at: [conservation-advice@rspb.org.uk](mailto:conservation-advice@rspb.org.uk)

<https://www.randa.org/golf-course-2030-projects-biodiversity>



**GEO Foundation**

**BIGGA**





## R&A Golf Course 2030 Programme

- Climate change
- Increased regulation
- Resource restrictions



**#TheSustainabilityDrive**

2022 – 2025

# England Golf

## Sustainability Drive and Sustainability Toolkit

# Solutions

View all



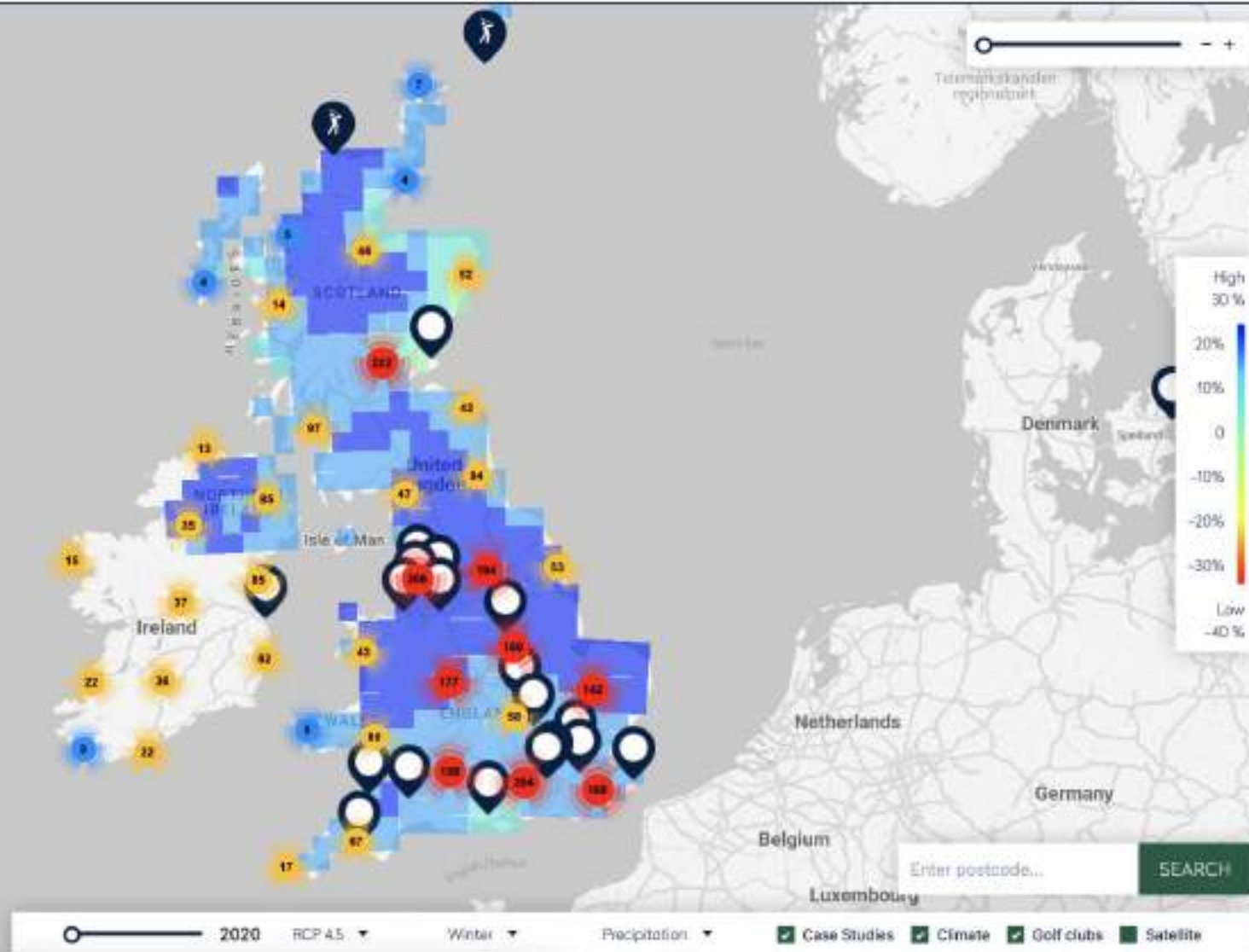
## Introduction and Executive Summary

Water, like many other natural resources, is variable in its supply. Over the last 40-50 years, golf courses have become increasingly reliant on artificial irrigation to maintain and improve turfgrass quality. All golf courses have a duty to themselves, and to the wider environment to ensure that their water sourcing strategies are sustainable and secure for long term use.



## Site Water Action and Management Plans

The initial step in any irrigation changes.



[www.golfcourse2030water.com](http://www.golfcourse2030water.com)

# Solutions

View all



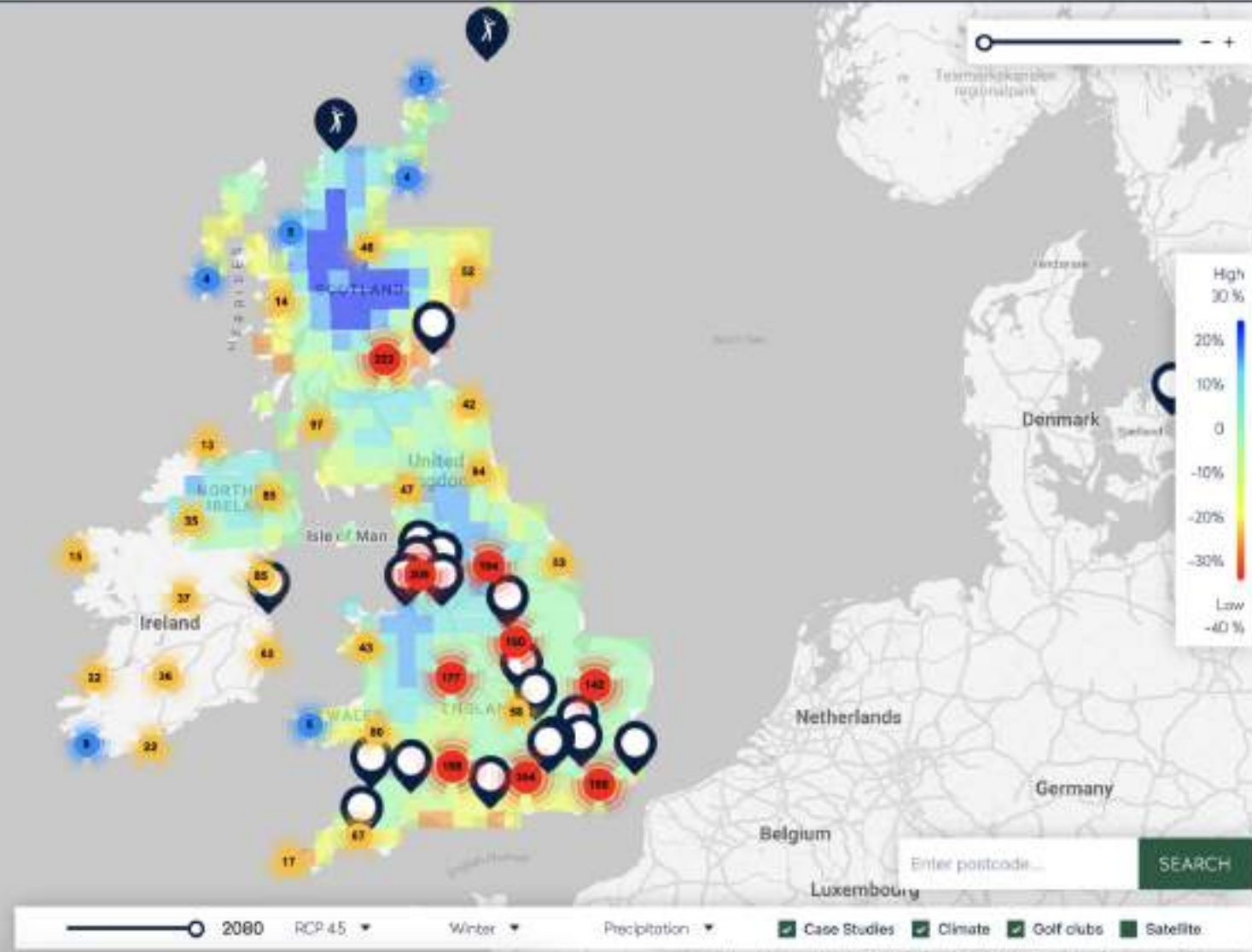
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Monitoring

## Site Water Action and Management Plans



# Solutions

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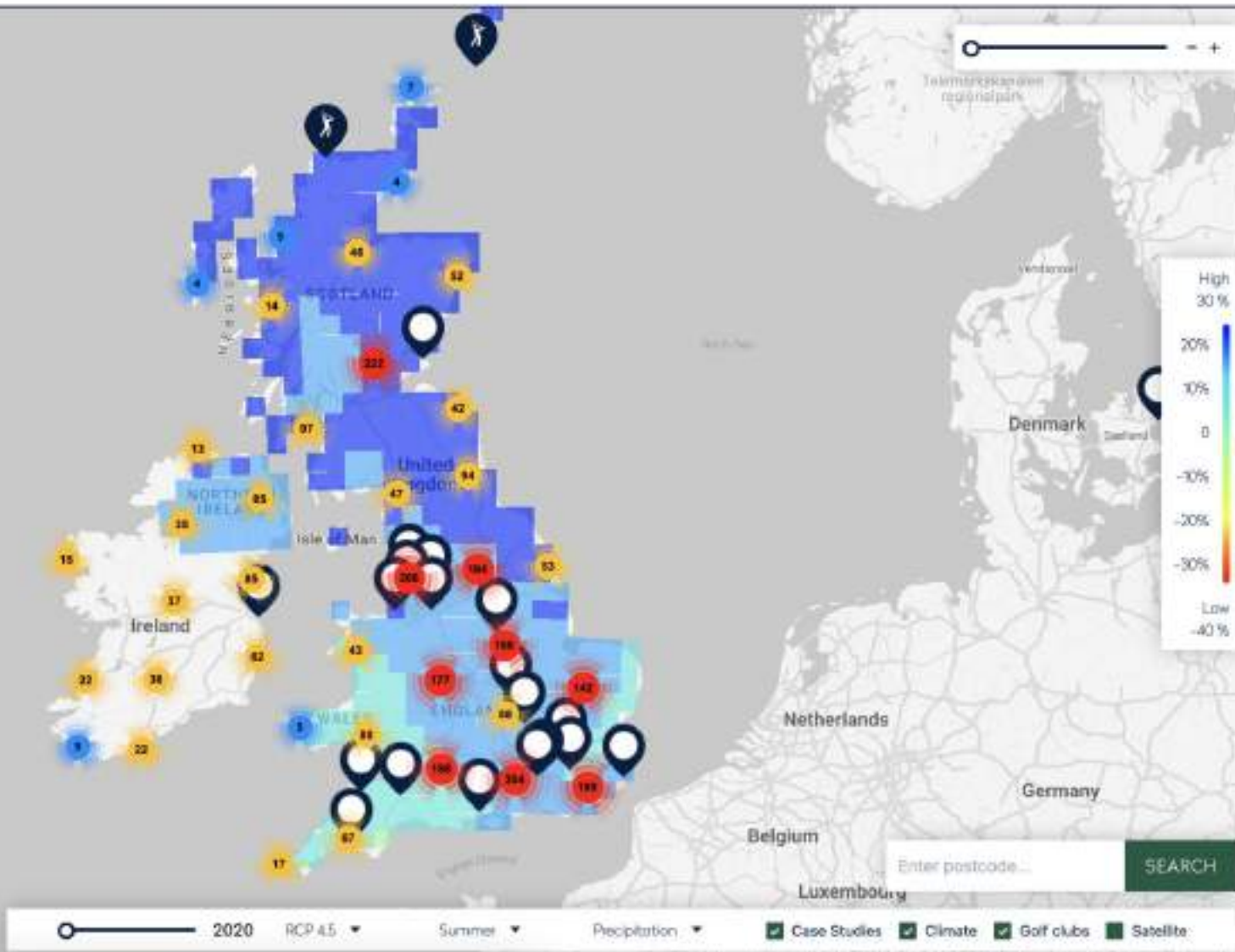
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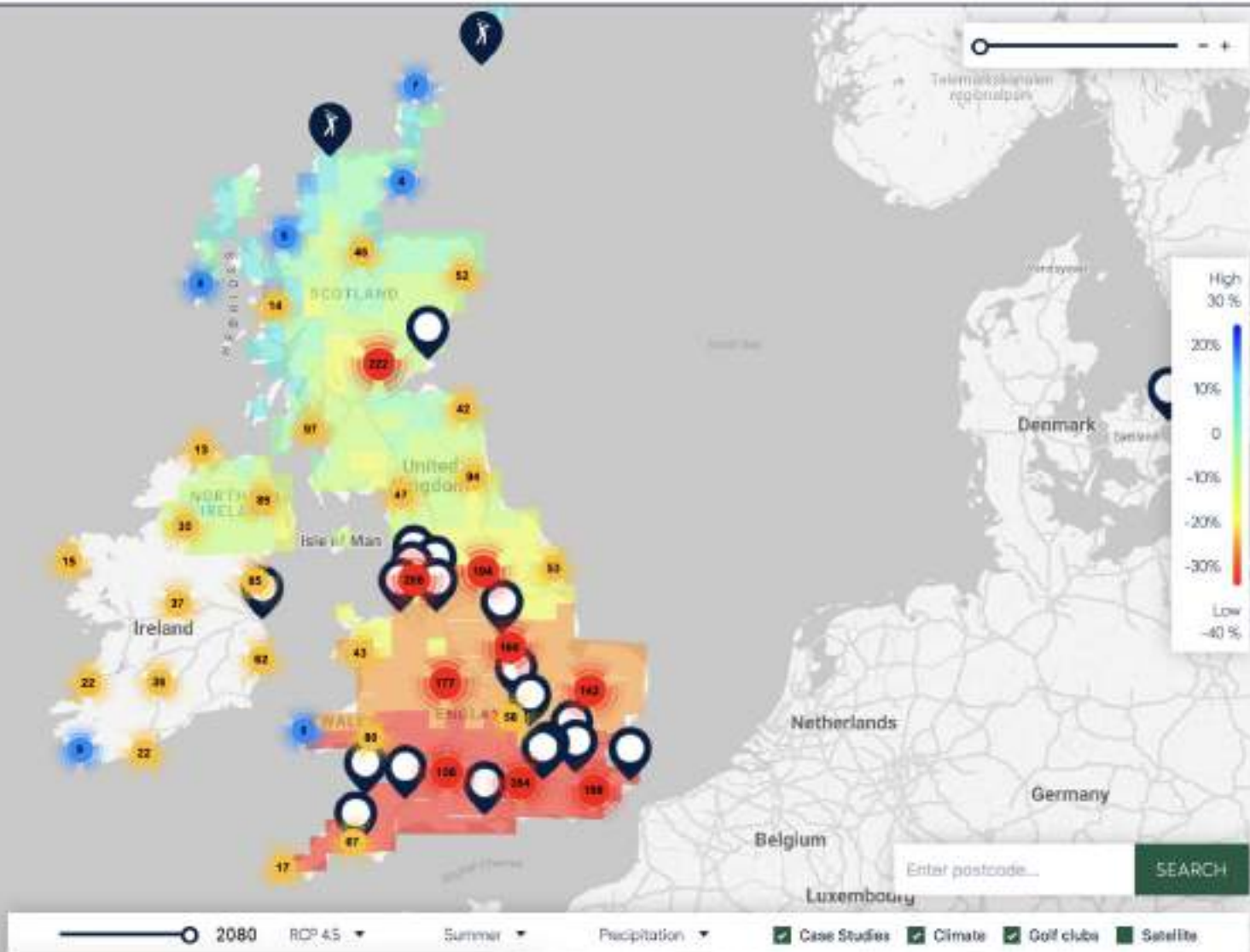
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# Initiatives



**Create,  
Manage  
or Restore Ponds**



**Marginal  
vegetation**





**Look after your hedges!**



Encourage pollinators



**Solitary  
Bee “Hotel”**

**Royal  
Troon**





**Veteran Trees**

**Standing dead wood**



## HERON'S REST



Common blue damselfly on goat willow

Marsh orchid and yellow rattle

Common toad basking in wetland on 5th hole

The extensive deep roughs which flank the hole both left and right provide significant ecological interest associated with this picturesque par 3. The grasslands through the course are managed to provide the ideal hazard from a golfing perspective, offering thin and open grasslands towards play and thicker more rank sward further afield. Not only does this provide the golfer with fair punishment dependent on the distance from the playing line, but also a variety of ecological niches for both thin and tussocky grassland specialist mammals and invertebrates.

Through the lower sections of the 5th hole the land is gently contoured to accept run off water and channel it away from in play areas. This has allowed for the development of semi-wetland habitat dominated by soft rush, these in turn offer roosting and foraging habitat for dragonflies and damselflies such as the common blue damselfly which can be noted in high numbers through the summer months.

The wetland on the approach to the green is one of the most ecologically rich areas on the course. You will

note that the vegetation composition differs dramatically from the more dry and elevated grasslands through the first four holes, with regenerative scrub dominated by goat willow being prevalent through this area. Interesting plant species around the fringes of this wetland include northern marsh orchid and yellow rattle.

Aptly named 'Heron's Rest' the 5th hole supports a number of wetland birds such as willow warbler and reed bunting in addition to the ubiquitous heron. The willow warbler is a summer visitor and can often be heard calling from deep within the scrub to the far left of the hole. Those quieter golfers amongst you may also see the secretive buntings hopping around within the reeds and scrub closer to the playing line.

These seasonally flooded wetlands which traverse the 5th hole offer the perfect opportunity for amphibia to live out their lives uninterrupted by larger predatory fish. The seasonal desiccation of these areas prevent the large predators from establishing and therefore species such as smooth newt and common toad are plentiful.

5  
PAR 3

199yds

186yds

175yds

### PRO'S TIP

Opening Par 3. Water and a large greenside bunker await any miss-hit shot. Requires a high soft landing shot to hold the shallow green.



More  
imaginative  
Strokesavers



# BOTANICAL AND WILDLIFE INTERESTS AT REAY GOLF COURSE

Reay Golf Course has a rich and diverse botanical and archaeological history, as well as being a scenic and challenging test of golf. 58 acres of the course are protected in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These S.S.S.I.s are protected areas hosting a variety of species of plants and wildlife which we nurture and maintain. Fundamental to the unique character of the course is its naturalness and we wish to retain and cherish this splendid natural habitat as nature intended. The dune system houses important vegetation and indigenous grasses as well as natural flora and fauna.

The course itself supports a wide range of diverse wildlife especially the birds. They include the Oyster Catcher, The Dipper, Ringed Plover, Sand Martins, Skylarks, and Swallows. The Oyster Catcher breeds on the course and often lays eggs in the fairways. The Skylarks use the old rabbit scrapes as nest sites. The Ringed Plover breeds in the Sahara the wetland in the centre of the course and Shell Ducks occupy and brood in the old rabbit burrows. Black Gullerrets, Gulls and Terns also breed locally on the adjacent cliffs and beach. On occasion whales have been seen in the adjacent firth and Dolphins have also been spotted. There is a resident population of Otters, rarely sighted in the Isauld Burn. Wild Duck frequent the burns along with the wild Brown Trout. Insects are in abundance with a number of different butterflies especially the Small Blue. Rabbits graze on the fairways and help keep the natural grasses dominant.

In the summer there is a carpet of wild flowers which thrive in ideal local conditions. There are a large number of species of wild plants such as orchids, lichens, fungi and mosses. Throughout the seasons of the year we have Cowslips, Water Avens, Autumn Gentian and a favorite the Grass of Parnassus. Marram grass has stabilized the dune complex allowing a rich variety of plants to populate the dune complex and the links.

Reay Golf Club managing the course and Sandside Estate the owners are both proud to be the custodians of this beautiful and natural links Golf Course. It should be recognized that the wildlife present at Reay is there because of and not despite of the golf course. Reay Golf Club and Sandside Estate are committed to the protection of the environment and bio-diversity within the Golf Course. Best Practice and our Conservation Policy Statement is adopted for grassland and turf management and there is a policy of organic waste composting. The result is this beautiful environmentally friendly Golf Course.







## Sustainability is wider than just Biodiversity



GLASS



PLASTIC



ORGANIC



METAL



PAPER



BATTERIES

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