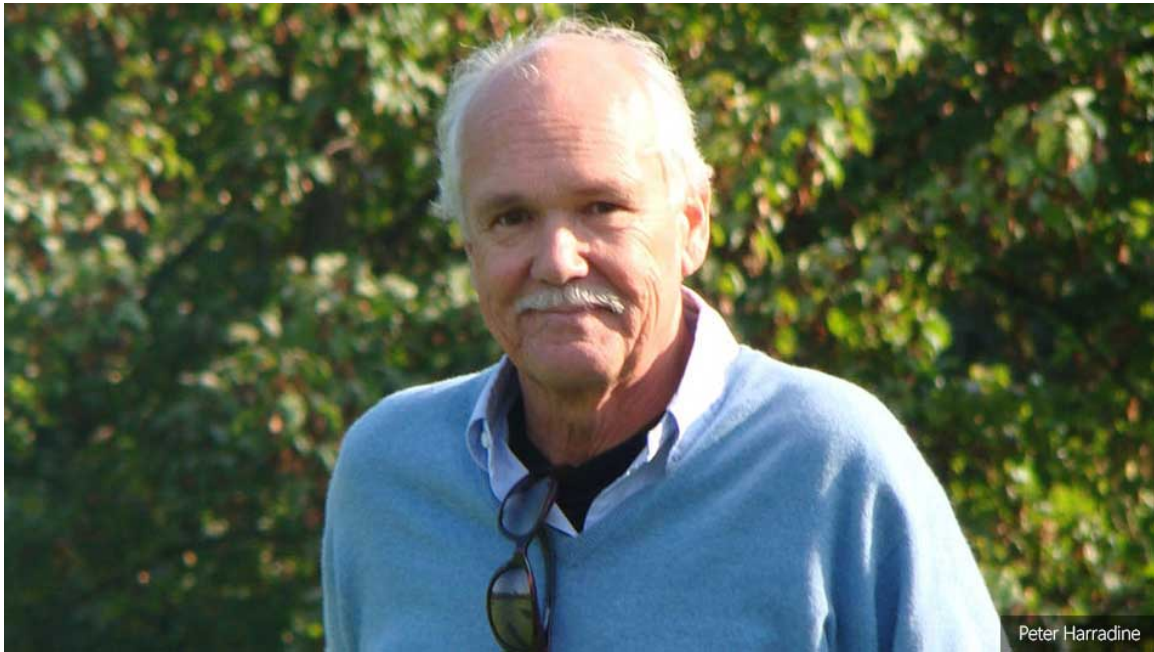


“Nobody has ever experienced anything like this before”

By Richard Humphreys ,Friday 27 Mar, 2020



Over the coming weeks, GCA will be speaking with golf course architects to find out how the corona virus pandemic is affecting their working lives. Here, Peter Harradine shares some insight into the impact for his firm.

“Fortunately, we completed our existing projects on site before last year’s winter,” said Harradine. “They only have to be issued with a completion certificate once the grass has grown and is cut to the specified standard.”

Various countries around the world have entered a lockdown phase and restricted people from going to work unless those activities are deemed essential by the government. These measures have impacted golf projects around the world, including Harradine’s.

“The procedure and access to the sites caused by this situation is unknown as countries are still in severe lockdown and golf courses are not considered ‘essential’,” said Harradine. “We are supposed to start the construction of a course in June, but I don’t really know if that date will be kept especially as rules and regulations are changing daily.

“It is quite difficult to plan anything at this time due to the incredible uncertainty. Nobody has ever experienced anything like this before so the client will not take any decisions, invoking force majeure, even if you have a contract.

“It is also quite complicated with the staff as one cannot give any information – yet – with certainty regarding starting dates, etc.”

GCA asked Harradine about how his travel plans had been affected by any restrictions: “I managed to get out of Switzerland in time, but I’m now stuck in Dubai, which is actually a nice place to be stuck in,” he replied. “I already have my flights booked from April until August, including prospective meetings with clients for new jobs, but who knows if I will be able to go? And will the clients change their minds?”

“I think that the most frustrating phenomenon of this whole situation is the utter uncertainty regarding what will happen in the next six months.”

Remaining as productive as possible during the global crisis is key, made challenging when so many people are working from home.

“Fortunately, AutoCAD [computer-aided design and drafting software] has been a great help in the design of golf courses, although I insist that my architects design the initial master plan by hand and on an A1 sheet,” said Harradine. “How can you see the big picture on a flipping computer screen?”

“AutoCAD is very good for detailed designs, bills of quantities, etc. The fact that one can use a computer for a lot of our work means that we can remain very productive by working mostly from home.

“The daily and hourly message sent by the authorities in the UAE is: stay at home! Communications and the exchange of ideas is also very easy with video conferences, which means that all this modern technology is definitely helping this unfortunate situation.”