

## Greens Update May 2018

As the 2018 season begins we are beginning to reap some of the benefit of works planned and completed on greens supported by Paul Miller, Agronomist. We have completed the paths at 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> and are progressing the paths at 4<sup>th</sup> and areas of 6<sup>th</sup>. The bunker upgrades at 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> are completed. We still have some work to fully interchange the old sand for the new in the remaining bunkers. In addition, we are trialling new bunker liners at 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>. We have some teething problems and are reviewing the continued use of these.

As to the course in general, the greens have survived a horrendous deluge of rain, snow and cold temperatures, but have remained true and firm albeit that they have been initially slow. In the last 2 weeks we have seen an uplift in the temperature and hence growth and as the greens seed we can begin to enhance the speed without fear of damage from a major cold spell.

As part of our Woodland strategy, we have removed a number of evergreens where light and airflow have been restricted to greens and tees. The 17<sup>th</sup> green in particular is substantially healthier and firmer confirmed by data measurement. The 7<sup>th</sup> medal area has been cleared of fallen trees and undergrowth and it is now important that we regenerate these particular areas with more appropriate shrubs, plants and smaller trees, to create habitats and attract pollinating insects, to add colour and character to these areas.

Over the last 3-4 years we have experienced a substantial increase in the annual rainfall. Initially averaging around 950mm we now measure the average rainfall at approx. 1370mm. All of this moisture is having a major impact on our course condition, drainage, and limiting our winter project work. Subsequently there is an increase in thatch levels, an increase in disease, with soft surfaces throughout the course. These conditions are having a major impact on our current drainage installations with increased localised collapse and increased maintenance. Our winter was exacerbated by the snow and extreme cold temperatures. The impact on our seasonal winter project works and construction tasks this year was quite restrictive, reducing the period from 5 months to approx. 3 months.

Overall, what this means is we are getting higher rainfall, less dry days, with an increased footfall and higher expectations from the members, with much less time to address the projects needed to keep our course in top condition. Inevitably however, this will mean an alteration of our working practices, considering some renovation projects being carried out at key times during the season where there is no substantial impact on play.

We are coping with the greens, tees, aprons and fairways with more tining and sanding, but areas of semi rough are suffering. Within the summer season our main focus is on upkeep and cutting, particularly with our size of estate, from main course, Par 3, practice ground and of course the house and pro shop environments. We can exploit more machinery where its use creates efficiencies and are exploring the purchase of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-hand fairway mower.

Our strategy over the next few months is to plan early; provide the members with our plans and set expectations for the forthcoming Winter works.

Key projects proposed for 2018-19 winter works are:

- Renew path 4<sup>th</sup> tee
- Resolve the problem of water ingress at 14<sup>th</sup> greenside
- Renovate bunkers and drainage at 4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> holes

- Redesign Par 3 course to reflect 9 holes from existing 7 on top level and add water source.
- Drain Par 3 1<sup>st</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> area, and create double bay driving nets, warm-up pitching area to 1<sup>st</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> green, adding bunker to left hand side of green.

On the personnel aspect we welcome Ryan Brown as our Apprentice Greenkeeper. However, we are still operating without A. McCullough and wish him well with his recovery.

Finally, can I plead with members to help us help you. We continually find that bunkers are not being raked properly, and in many cases, not at all. There is increasing evidence of a lack of pitch mark repairs. This lack of attention shown by the few, affects the many, and it is your money we are spending. Please help and advise fellow members to be diligent where possible.

I hope you all have a very successful season and please keep the constructive comments coming.

Jock

John McNeill  
Greens Convener