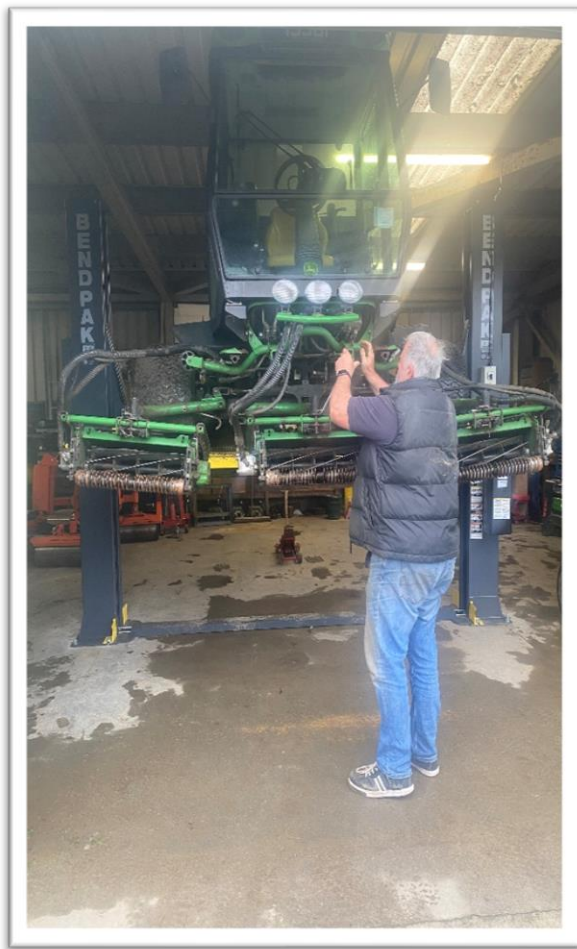


**Dear Members**

Firstly, I hope everyone had a great Christmas and New Year and have been busy practicing for the upcoming season. The golf course for the time of year has been extremely busy, with the mild dry weather we have been seeing has encouraged hundreds of members to get out on the course and take full advantage of the pleasant weather.

On a greenkeeping side of things the mild weather has kept the grass growing with all the playing surfaces still requiring a mow on a weekly basis. I am hoping in the coming weeks the grass slows with the colder weather that is usual for this time of year. This will enable all the mowing equipment to be serviced, sharpened and ready to go for the season ahead.

G.C.M has recently invested in a machine lift. This lift will enable Kevin our mechanic to maintain our fleet of machinery with great ease by being able to reach machinery components from different angles whilst not having to work on the floor. The lift will also aid in general set up of the cutting units as we can drive the machine on to the lift and check each cutting unit without the need to take off each individual unit and lift manually. We also must provide a safer working environment for our staff. This will also take excessive pressure off staff having to lift units and work on the floor which in turn will reduce potential back and knee injuries.



***(Machinery Prepared and Height of Cut Set)***

### **Winter Golf**

Although this winter so far has been mild there has been significant rainfall at times. We have seen certain high trafficked areas become damaged and have now had to introduce certain traffic management measures to protect the course. These consist of blue lines situated at the start of the green's approaches. If members could kindly follow these lines away from the green complexes and walkways to certain tees this will dramatically reduce the wear we are experiencing around the greens. Ropes and posts have also been deployed on the severely damaged areas to reduce damage further.



***(Traffic Management Measures)***

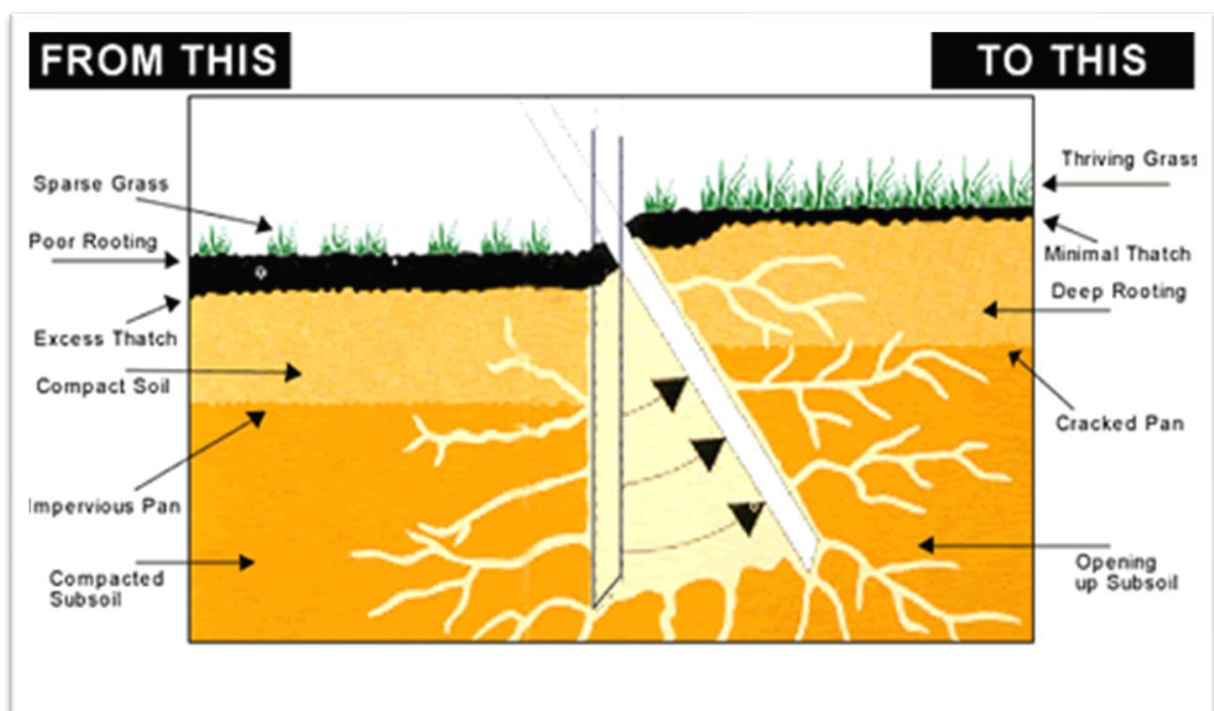
### **Pitchmarks**

Im glad to say we have noticed a great improvement in the number of unrepaired ball marks on the putting surfaces. Its great to see many members now taking the time to repair their pitchmarks. This will aid us in producing high quality putting surfaces and will reduce movement of the golf ball whilst putting.

## Aeration

During December we were lucky enough to have a dry week and I decided to deep tine the putting surfaces to a depth of nine inches. I understand there was disruption and of short notice but the benefits of this practice in dry to moist soils are too great an opportunity to miss. Numerous greenkeeping practices are weather dependant and being able to predict weather and inform members in time proves to be difficult.

The benefits of this type of aeriation practice are huge. I have covered aeration and its benefits extensively in previous reports and the attached picture summarizes our achievements in conducting this practice.



### ***(Verti-Drain Aeration Benefits)***

We have not only been aerating the putting surfaces at L'Ancrese but many of you would have seen the Tractor and Verti-Drain attachment working its way around the course aerating our Fairways, Approaches, Semi-roughs, Carries and certain weak compacted rough areas. This is an incredibly time-consuming job. The benefits to the quality of turf are enormous and the pros far outweigh the cons. Currently we have Five holes left to aerate. We have experienced some very heavy rainfall at times and so far, the course has not been closed due to waterlogged conditions with all the main playing surfaces draining quickly ensuring the golf course is open for play proving the benefits of these aeration practices.

## Rabbits

Over the past month Myxomatosis has taken hold across the common and we are currently witnessing high numbers of infected rabbits. Myxomatosis is spread by insects and by direct contact with infected rabbits.



Currently we have restricted control measures on the increasing rabbit population and whilst this disease is an upsetting way to see rabbits die it will have significant effect on the overall numbers and damage occurring across the common.

The green staff have been busy stripping preparing and turfing many of the damaged areas on our closely mown surfaces across the course. We will be turfing the remainder of these areas in the coming days when the turf arrives from the U.K.

I hope with the help from the Rabbits and the onset of Myxomatosis we will see a vast reduction in damage, this will give the green staff a chance to start filling the thousands of holes, without them being unearthed the following day.



***(Excessive Rabbit Damage 15<sup>th</sup> Hole)***



**(Rabbit Damage Repair Works)**



***(Damaged Areas Turfed)***



### **Golf Course Ecology Report**

Golf Course Management have now had delivery of Golf Course Ecology Consultant Sophie Olejnik's Report. Sophie's extensive report on the ecological management of the links is incredibly informative.

Members who wish to access Sophie's Report will be able to view on their club's websites in the coming days.

Having received Sophie's Report in December G.C.M will be meeting in the coming weeks to discuss a plan of action to implement the improvements suggested. We aim to conduct smaller works this winter.

Further works will need certain specialist equipment that I hope to be able to get in place over the coming years. The extensive report will take many years to complete but if we are serious about improving the links from an aesthetic and playability point of view, whilst providing a haven for the local flora and fauna to flourish we must start somewhere and it is encouraging to see steps are being taken to start on that journey.

These works will be added to the five year plan. Although many of the works suggested could take longer as there are vast areas to cover. The majority of these works will be carried out in house over the winter months.

### **Grass Clipping Removal**

Over many years the L'Ancrese Greenkeepers have deposited their grass clippings in areas around the course. Unfortunately overtime this has encouraged enrichment of the soil encouraging weed and rank grass encroachment.

For those members reading Sophie's Ecology report she has expressed great concern on how damaging this has been to the Links over the years. We have explored ways in eradicating this and have purchased three tow trailers for our Greens, Tees and Approach mowers. These trailers will now enable the Green Staff to compost their grass clippings away from the course.



***(Grass Clipping Removal Trailer)***

## **Irrigation**

As I'm sure many of you are aware the Irrigation system at L'Ancrese is failing. As far as our research shows the existing system was installed circa 1985. The pipe work used at this time was PVC that has a life expectancy in the region of fifteen to twenty five years. Due to this we now encounter weekly repair works to the PVC pipe work that is proving to be extremely labour intensive to repair. We are also experiencing regular faults with the decoders and solenoids during the system operation.

Golf Course Management have explored countless methods to upgrade the system and are currently putting together an action plan in the undertaking of a complete system upgrade. Once the relevant quotations are finalised G.C.M will be taking all plans and quotations to the membership for approval in an E.G.M.

A new system would bring with it an incredibly water efficient system that would improve the quality of the golf course during the summer months substantially. Water is now becoming scarce and an efficient system would save in the region of 25% water than is currently used today. The consistent coverage the sprinklers would achieve would be up to 50% improvement, currently there are many areas the water coverage is not consistent where turf can be seen in decline during the summer months or over watered causing lush growth and weed grass infestation not suitable for golf.

Each sprinkler would also be able to be operated individually by the valve in head design. This brings with it many benefits from the ability to apply water exactly where it is needed and not to irrigate areas that do not need water. The current system is on a block design where all 4 sprinklers have to be operated at the same time. This at times means we have to water areas that do not need irrigation. Significant improvements would be noticed especially on the putting surfaces where we could keep our moisture readings within the parameters required by fine grass species that would also provide extremely high performing consistent playing surfaces.

I hope the memberships can see the problems we are facing currently and the advantages a new system would provide to their golfing experience and future generations that will enjoy the Links here at L'Ancrese.

I hope this report has given you all an insight to some of the works we have been undertaking this winter and future plans going forward.

I also hope everyone is taking full advantage of this dry weather we are experiencing at the present with the competition season not too far away now and everyone is fine tuning their game ready for the season ahead.

**Kind Regards**

**Ollie**

