

Ground Report December 2019

Winter rules covering fairways, rough and bunkers, and use of mats remain in place. Although some of the earth mounds placed by the EA in the wooded area at the elbow of the 6th have now been removed GUR remains in place, as denoted by the white line. All penalty areas are marked with red stakes.

Impact of Flooding Events – Current Status

Liaison continues with the Highway's Agency (HA) to establish the location and nature of the blockage of our outlet drain from the 16th pond. The HA have committed to undertake a CCTV survey, which has been delayed due to high river levels, and then undertake the repair. We have advised the HA that the repair needs to be completed prior to Christmas.

A single hire pump is now operating, pumping water from a manhole adjacent to the 16th pond directly into the River Mersey. The temporary pipework has been buried as it crosses the Highways Agency working area. This has significantly reduced the workload on the ground staff in the management of the pumping arrangement and freed them to return to normal duties.

The pump is currently operating approximately 5 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition, our own smaller pump was used to clear standing water from the 17th and 18th fairways opposite the Clubhouse.

A number of silt blockages have been removed by the ground staff from the drain run between the 13th and 16th ponds. This is an important drain as, in addition to the 13th fairway, it also picks up drainage from the 12th, 11th, 15th, and 9th fairways. Standing water on these fairways has now reduced significantly.

Most of the surface water has now been removed from the course. However, the 17th and 18th fairways remain vulnerable to localised flooding during periods of heavy rain, suggesting that silt from the recent floods may have entered these drains and restricted flow. Investigations will take place as soon as the surface water has gone. Drainage of localised surface water off the 17th and 18th fairways has also been slowed due to the recent frosty weather.

The ground level survey needed to support the design of the additional pond storage and interceptor ditches is now virtually completed. It is intended that a scheme will be available for pricing prior to Christmas.

In parallel a number of additional drain runs have been identified which should help in draining wet areas. It is hoped that most of these drains will be installed by the ground staff as part of this year's Winter Projects (see Appendix 2)

In addition, cost estimates are being sought for clearing any blockages from our entire drainage system. This could be a major undertaking, given the age of many of our drains, but could yield significant long-term benefits.

Reinstatement undertaken following the July flood, has now been subject to further prolonged flooding and areas may be at risk of permanent damage. Further reinstatement i.e. verti-draining, seeding and top dressing may be required in early Spring 2020 to fully restore the playing surfaces to their former condition.

Consequently, STRI's next annual inspection will be arranged for late March / early April 2020 to allow any further remedial works to be agreed together with the green's early start conditioning programme.

Postscript – The Highways Agency confirmed that they will commence excavations on Monday 9th December to locate and repair the blockage to our outlet drain from the 16th pond.

Works completed this month

The additional workload on the Ground staff following the latest flood, together with very wet ground conditions have had a significant adverse impact on normal course maintenance activities.

However, once the drainage problems have been fully resolved, the intention is to catch up over the Winter and early Spring with the treatment programmes for the greens, tees fairways to ensure the course is fully recovered and in optimum condition at the start of next season.

Greens:

Cutting frequency once per week, by hand, as growth rate reduces.

No ironing has taken place this month.

Holes are now being changed once / week, normally on a Thursday morning before the Ladies competition.

Solid tining (procure) to increase aeration and improve drainage.

Some greens are suffering from isolated patches of fusarium. Treatment is not currently considered necessary as the disease will not survive the heavy frosts currently being experienced.

Tees:

The tees have not required cutting, as the growth rate has reduced.

Verti-drained to increase aeration and improve drainage. The annual tee conditioning programme scheduled for late September / early October has had to be put back. However, it is intended that all treatment will have been undertaken by early April 2020. This may require tees to be taken out of play in mid-March to allow tining, seeding and top dressing to take place.

The tees remain in good condition, however like the rest of the course they are very wet. The new artificial teeing areas have been brought into play on the par 3s and the second hole. White teeing areas have been withdrawn from use over the Winter period and other teeing areas will be rotated frequently to avoid damage.

Construction of a new artificial tee on the 11th hole has commenced as part of this year's Winter Projects. The 5th and 12th holes will also be provided with artificial tees this year.

Fairways:

The fairways have not required cutting, as the growth rate has reduced.

No treatment this month. It was not possible to undertake the annual verti-draining of the fairways in November due to the flooding and extremely wet ground conditions elsewhere. It is now likely that this will be undertaken in early Spring.

The fairways remain very wet, but with good grass coverage. The incidents of large divots has reduced as mats have been introduced into play. However, removal of leaves has been problematic, due to the workload placed on the ground staff in operating the temporary pumps

and also the very wet ground conditions which has preventing the tractor blower from being used. The drier conditions late November / early December will allow the ground staff to focus on clearing the key areas.

Rough:

The rough has not required cutting, as the growth rate has reduced.

No treatment this month.

Removal of leaves as outlined above in the Fairway section

Bunkers:

Not possible this month due the regular flooding, following periods of heavy rain.

No treatment this month.

If free of surface water, all the bunkers will be rotovated and raked again in late January, to allow them to be returned into play at the beginning of February.

Those bunkers worst affected by the recent flooding events will be considered for drainage improvements and inclusion in the 2019 /20 Winter Projects programme.

Practice Areas:

The practice area has not required cutting, as the growth rate has reduced

No treatment this month.

Other Areas / Clubhouse grounds

Strimming of re-growth of nettles/weeds around the base of trees, hedges and along buggy paths will continue over the Winter and out of bounds marker posts either side of the hedge between the 5th and 16th holes repainted.

Work by the specialist Contractor to cut the grass slopes to the river bank and hedgerows has now stopped. Work on the hedgerows will recommence in late February / early March before the start of the nesting season.

The HS2 ecological survey continues with 90 reptile mats placed on the course, on holes 1, 2 and 7. The mats have been located in non- mown areas so as not to interfere with play or maintenance of the course.

The Gardening Sub-committee are continuing to meet on a bi-monthly basis, attendance:

Biddy Schilizzi (chair), Julie Webb, and Paul Higgins.

The volunteer gardeners continue to maintain planted areas around the Clubhouse. Planting improvements have been carried out to the beds either side of the flagpole and to the rockery.

The hedges within the car park have also been trimmed. The hanging baskets have been taken down and perennials re-planted within the main bed outside the entrance to the clubhouse.

The ground staff will reinstate the timbers to the bed at the rear of the 5th tee, lifted by the flooding.

In advance of removing the rotten wooden planters along the Clubhouse balcony three stand-alone pots have been planted up. When the planters are removed many of the plants will be re-used elsewhere, e.g. in the rockery adjacent to the practice net.

The Ground committee extends its thanks to this hard-working group of volunteers.

However, the need for more gardening volunteers remains, as highlighted in the recent Club newsletter.

In the Spring it is intended to re-plant around the proposed extended pond system between the 16th tee and the rear of the 17th green, to improve the appearance of this area.

Damage to the track behind the 16th and 9th tees caused by the Contractor employed by the National Grid to removed tall trees from the M60 embankment adjacent to their HV lines will be reinstated in early Spring. The Club has received compensation from the National Grid for

this work.

The toilet unit, adjacent to the 8th tee, remains off hire.

The new “Blue Course” holes have remained in play throughout the Autumn. Discussions are on-going with Marketing on how best to promote the use of the short course as a means of attracting new members and in particular juniors.

STRI Recommendations & Maintenance Weeks:

STRI, through their representative Gwynn Davies, continues to provide valuable technical guidance on how best to address damage caused by the recent flooding events. The Ground committee extends its thanks to Gwynn.

The next annual inspection will take place in late March 2020. This will include reviews of next year’s early start treatment programme for the greens, any further treatment needed to the tees to compensate for the deferral of this year’s Autumn maintenance programme and whether any further treatment is needed to fairways affected by flooding.

Schedule of Major Competitions in December:

3rd Winter Stableford: Saturday 30th November.

1st Winter League: Saturday 7th December (rearranged).

Ladies Christmas Cake Competition: Thursday 12th December.

4 Ball Better Ball Stableford: Saturday 14th December.

Ladies Texas Scramble: Thursday 19th December.

Three Clubs and a Putter Event: Saturday 21st December.

Christmas Texas Scramble: Saturday 28th December.

Ongoing liaison between Gary and David Hunter continues regarding course requirements for each week’s 7-day competitions.

Machinery update:

The only major machinery repair in November was to the Club’s portable pump, which was being used to clear standing water off the 17th and 18th fairways

Capital issues:

Replacements for small equipment damaged by the floods is continuing. This month a new cement mixer and generator were purchased. Replacement welding equipment is still required, Damien to confirm to Patrick the required specification.

An order for the 6 walkie talkie handsets, currently on offer, was about to be placed.

Tree work update

No major damage to trees occurred in November. Proactive tree management by the ground staff will recommence in the New Year, once ground conditions are suitable.

The National Grid have completed the removal of “at risk” tall trees on the M60 embankment close to their high voltage overhead lines. The Club agreed to provide NG’s Contractor access to undertake this work, and we will receive compensation for this. However, the work has caused damage to the track to the rear of the 16th and 9th tees, this will be re-instated and seeded in early Spring.

However, National Grid have now confirmed that the felling of trees to safeguard the integrity of their overhead lines running across the course from the 18th tee to the 13th tee has now been postponed until 2020. The removal of the diseased trees within the copse to the

left-hand side of the 17th fairway, which is to form part of the compensation package has also been deferred to next year, as has the trimming of a number of trees affecting the playability of the 6th, 13th, 14th and 18th holes (to prevent damage to the course).

A £3.1 allowance for STRI to produce a specialist report on tree management is still retained in the approved 2019/20 Ground budget.

Health & Safety update:

There were no reportable H&S incidents in November, or ground staff “near misses”.

The report summarising the conclusions of the biannual external H&S audit, conducted by Alan B. Partnership, in early July, which involved a joint course inspection has now been received. Documentation provided with the report included an updated COSHH register.

No significant Ground issues were identified in the report. Ground’s H&S File and annual Planner will be updated to ensure compliance with the audit recommendations.

The next external audit will now be held on Tuesday 21st January 2020

H&S signage provided following s recent “look and see” course inspection has subsequently been damaged by vandals. The number of signs requiring replacement with anti-vandal signage will be established at a H&S “look and see on Tuesday 7th January 2020.

Gary and Tom will be sent on refresher a chainsaw training course as soon as one becomes available. Consideration will also be given to them obtaining licences to operate large excavation machinery. This would increase the in-house capability to undertake larger Winter Projects, particularly related to drainage improvements

2019/20 Winter Project update:

The programme of Winter Projects for 2019/2020 has been updated in light of the recent flooding and additional drainage improvements have been included. The current summary of Winter Projects for 2019/2020 (Appendix 2: 2019/20 Winter Projects Version 10 – December 2019) is appended to this Report.

2018/19 Grounds Budget Update:

The wages allowance has been revised to accommodate the appointment of an additional apprentice (Daniel Nally) commencing 1st October 2019. An updated budget produced to reflect the change in wages allowance has been approved by the Finance Director.

Ground costs incurred for the period up to October 2019 have been assessed and compared with the approved 2019/20 budget. Excluding costs accrued against the flood claim we are currently forecasting a saving of approximately £4.5k, reflecting reduced green keeping activities caused by the flooding between August and October.

All additional ground costs arising from the flooding events are being recorded and passed to Patrick. In addition, a photographic record is being kept to support our compensation claim with the EA.

Ground Committee Meeting update:

The next Ground meeting will be held on Tuesday 14th January 2020, 1130hr.

The last “look and see” meeting was held on Tuesday 19th November to review the ongoing

drainage problems. A follow up meeting was then held on Friday 22nd November to identify potential permanent drainage remediation solutions, with Phil Hill and Jay Patel attending providing additional technical support.

In advance of the next external audit in January 2020, two H&S “look and see” meetings will be held: on Tuesday 17th December (documentation review) and Tuesday 7th January 2020 (signage inspection).