

Ground Report January

Introductory Notes:

Winter rules covering fairways, rough and bunkers, and use of mats remain in place.

Following heavy rainfall for most of December it has been decided to make mats mandatory through the green until ground conditions improve.

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

The Highway's Agency (HA) successfully resolved the blockage of our outlet drain from the 16th pond just before Christmas. We have been monitoring the performance of the drain since and it is working satisfactorily. There is some evidence of silt being discharged with the flow, which is to be expected following the repair. As a precaution a cctv survey of the drain will be undertaken by our drainage contractor to check that no other damage is evident.

The jetting hose that was trapped at the drain outfall has also been successfully removed, allowing the flap valve to shut normally during high river levels. As a precaution we are going to undertake a visual flow test to check that the flap valve is seating properly and preventing back feed from the River on to the course.

Assurance that the flap valve is working will allow us to maintain our isolating valve in an open position allowing discharge off the course at all times when river levels are low. Currently the valve is being closed when heavy rain is forecast.

The single emergency pump and associated pipework has now been taken off hire, removing the workload on the ground staff in the management of the pumping arrangement, freeing them to return to normal duties. However, a buried pipe has been provided across the HA access road allowing rapid connection to an emergency pump should flooding of the course occur in the near future. This has been fitted with a bung to prevent high river levels back feeding on to the course.

However, the Club's own smaller 3inch pump is currently out of service again, and may be beyond repair. Purchase of a replacement second hand pump is being urgently investigated.

The ground staff continue to remove localised silt deposits from the drainage system, which have built following the flooding events, allowing standing water to drain away more rapidly.

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 more extensive silt deposits may have entered these drains and restricted flow.

The scope of work needed to undertake a more comprehensive jetting and clearing of our drainage system has now been developed. This includes the provision of additional access/jetting points. A meeting with the preferred Contractor will be held on 22/23rd January to finalise a cost estimate and agree a priority-based programme of works. We will also be seeking estimates for undertaking annual maintenance works to ensure the drainage system continues to operate efficiently.

Short lengths of additional drain runs are being installed by the ground staff as part of this year's Winter Projects (see Appendix 2 and Section 1g))

The ground level survey needed to support the design of the additional pond storage and interceptor ditches around the 16th /17th /18th holes has been completed. The scope of works has been developed and cost estimates will be finalised by late January, again work will be undertaken on a priority basis, with the aim of minimising damage to the course.

A high-level proposal for providing flood protection to the basement storage areas of the clubhouse will also be investigated.

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 will 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 mid-March 2020 to allow any further remedial works to be agreed together with the green's / tee's early start conditioning programmes.

Works completed this month

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

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

Greens:

Cutting 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.

Slit tining of greens, to increase aeration and improve drainage.

A number of greens are still suffering from isolated patches of fusarium. It was hoped that the intermittent light frosts in December would kill off the disease. Unfortunately, this has not happened and our fungicide supplier is now being contacted to agree the most appropriate course of treatment.

Tees:

Cutting of tees have not required, as the growth rate has reduced. However, if the mild weather continues and the ground dries out the tees will be cut in late January.

No treatment this month. The annual tee conditioning programme cancelled in early October 2019 due to flooding will be undertaken by early April. 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 remain in 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 completed as part of this year's Winter Projects. The 5th and 12th holes will also be provided with artificial tees this year. Work on the 12th has now started.

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. However, the incidents of large divots increased significantly when the use of mats became discretionary. The temporary change to winter Rules should address this problem. Intermittent drier ground conditions have also allowed the tractor blower to be used to clear leaves. Wetter areas, where the leaves have become matted, are having to be cleared by hand.

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:

Raking has not be possible this month due the regular flooding, following periods of heavy rain.

No treatment this month.

Bunkers remain out of play. If free of surface water, all the bunkers will be rotovated and raked again in February, to allow them to be returned into play by the end 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 remains stopped. Work on the hedgerows will recommence in late February / early March before the start of the nesting season.

The HS2 ecological survey reptile mats have been removed from 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 carry out limited Winter activities, such as leaf removal from beds, trimming, and adjustments to bedding areas. Some damage to beds has been

caused by heavy plant / lorries gaining access to the HA working area. This needs to be raised with the HA together the damage caused to the car park area, particularly around the disabled parking area.

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 staff have reinstated the timbers to the bed at the rear of the 5th tee, lifted by the flooding, and replaced a damaged timber edging to the footpath leading to the 1st tee.

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 Winter. 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 mid-March 2020. This will include reviews of this year’s early start conditioning programme for the greens, treatment needed to the tees to compensate for the deferral of last year’s Autumn maintenance programme and what further treatment is needed to fairways affected by flooding.

Schedule of Major Competitions in January:

4th Winter Stableford: Saturday 4th January.

2nd Mixed Winter League: Sunday 5th January

2nd Winter League: Saturday 11th January (rearranged).

4 Ball Better Ball Stableford: Saturday 18th January.

3rd Winter League: Saturday 25th January (rearranged).

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

Machinery update:

No major machinery repairs were required in December. However, the Club's 3inch portable pump, remains out of service and may require replacement

Capital issues:

Replacements for small equipment damaged by the floods is continuing. It is proposed to replace the wood chipper with a larger second-hand unit, with an equivalent purchase price.

The 6 walkie talkie handsets have been delivered and are proving to be extremely useful.

Tree work update

No major damage to trees occurred in December. Proactive tree management by the ground staff will recommence in late January / early February, once ground conditions are suitable. An order for replacement PPE needed for chainsaw work is being placed.

We are still awaiting confirmation from the National Grid when they intend to fell trees across the course from the 16th tee to the 13th tee to safeguard the integrity of their overhead lines. 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 this 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 plan to soften the impact of the loss of trees along this corridor will need to be developed.

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 December. However, there was one ground staff "near miss" in mid-January.

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 reviewed. Documentation provided with the report included an updated COSHH register.

No significant Ground issues were identified in the report. Ground's H&S File, annual Planner and sign-off proformas have all been updated to ensure compliance with the audit recommendations.

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

Some H&S signage provided following last Summer's "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 28th January 2020.

Gary and Tom will attend a refresher chainsaw training course on 10th February. 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 11 – January 2020) is appended to this Report.

2018/19 Grounds Budget Update:

Ground costs incurred for the period up to December 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 £3.9k, reflecting reduced green keeping activities caused by the flooding between August and December.

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.

Course Drainage

A number of drainage improvements have been undertaken by the ground staff in December / early January to reduce the impact of the recent flooding:

- A new drain across the 18th fairway opposite the clubhouse.
- A new drain to intercept flow being discharged off the car park on to the 18th fairway.
- Drainage modifications around the 7th green and 8th tee to improve flow into the 8th pond from wet areas.
- Clearance of the drain running along the left-hand side of the 11th green and the front of the 12th tee. Greenside bunkers to the left of 11th green, prone to flooding, will be connected to this drain.
- Access points provided on the 13th fairway drain allowing this to be rodded, and cleared of silt.
- Initial soakaway provided to the wet area in 5th fairway, opposite 6th green, with more comprehensive drainage improvements to follow next year.

Ground Committee Meeting update:

The last Ground meeting was held on Tuesday 14th January 2020, 1130hrs, attendance: Eric Botham, Chris Killen, Gary Higgins, Tom Cullen and Colin Webb. The next Ground meeting will be held on Tuesday 11th February 2020, 1130hr.

The last “look and see” meetings were held on Tuesday 7th January, and Tuesday 14th January (pm) to review the ongoing drainage problems and develop permanent drainage remediation solutions. Phil Hill continues to provide valuable technical support in this process.

The next “look and see” meetings will be held: on Tuesday 28th January to inspect H&S course signage.

Ground Works programmed for January if different from December (weather dependent).
Increased focus on general course maintenance.