

Dear Members

Firstly, I hope everyone had a great Christmas and New Year and I wish both Graeme and Brian a successful year in their Captaincy for 2023.

I have put together a brief update from the Greenkeepers now we are within the Winter months.



Currently the course is closed. We have had considerable amount of rainfall this past month and unfortunately the course now has succumbed to the wet weather. There are now many areas of standing water. We will be assessing the weather and forecasts daily and updating each morning. The Greenkeepers will be out trying to move the excess water away. Our aim is to get play out as quickly as we can. Firstly, we must ensure it is safe to do so whilst also protecting the course from further damage that will be detrimental to the quality of playing surfaces going into the golfing season.



(Standing Water 15th)

Just before Christmas we pencil tined greens with 8mm solid tines to a depth of 4 inches. This again is needed to aide water and air penetration through the rootzone and release toxic gasses held in the upper profile. A light application of sand was also made to the greens to regain surface smoothness. A turf hardener of Potassium and Iron was also applied to the greens.

As we are now moving into the Winter months the grass has now become dormant and we are experiencing very little growth. It is now time for the Greenkeeping staff to undertake other duties that are essential but are only ever usually carried out when the grass stops growing and the priority of mowing ceases.

This year we have decided to limit the construction and turf repairing of areas until the new irrigation system is in place. This is mainly due to the ability of watering these areas with an inefficient system.

We will be concentrating primarily on our Ecological Management Plan, rabbit hole filling and repairing and replacing certain sleeper steps around the course. Ongoing repair work to our existing irrigation system will also be carried out.

Now the mowing machinery's use has reduced Kevin Walsh G.C.M equipment manager has now started servicing and sharpening all core machinery ready for the following year. These include

- 1 x Greens Mower
- 3 x Pedestrian Greens Mowers
- 2 x Tees & Approach Mowers
- 1 x Fairway Mower
- 1 x Semi Rough Mower
- 1 x Rough Mower
- 1 x Greens Tees Approaches (Spare)
- 1 x Sprayer
- 1 x Pro Gator Buggy
- 4 x Working Buggies

Golf Course Ecology

Last year Golf Course Management employed Sophie Olejnik to conduct a full ecological review of the golf course and surrounding land. Sophies report can be found on your relevant clubs' website.

Unfortunately, over time many of out of play areas have been neglected. Our aim over the coming years during the winter months is to address these issues. Over time Bramble and Bracken have started to out compete many areas of Gorse around the course. Either killing or reducing the Gorses growth habit turning it woody and leggy.

Sophie's recommendation is to coppice the existing Gorse down to 150mm allowing it to recover to form tight dense clusters capable of supporting nesting birds whilst also giving a healthy aesthetically pleasing backdrop to the hole. Obviously when work is first carried out these areas will look incredibly bare. Once recovered over time this will leave dense healthy clusters of Gorse.

Sophie also recommends the creation of bare sand areas (Sand Scrapes) These areas are being created on most links' courses across the U.K. The reason for this is to completely remove areas of rank grassland vegetation and/or scrub to a clean bare sand. Shaping in an informal manner to mimic natural dune blowouts. This method of removing organic-rich soil layers can provide bare soils for colonising pioneer species or can help instigate natural mobility which has been lost across the site.



(Area of Rank Vegetation Scraped to Natural Sand) (Royal Porthcawl G.C)

We have started to clear away Bramble between holes 11 and 13. Over time the Bramble and Bracken in the summer has started to colonise this area and unfortunately now has smothered and killed most of the Gorse within. We also have many wild Orchids that flower in early summer to the right of 13. I am hoping by clearing away the bramble this will now give priority to the natural Grasses, Orchids, Gorse, and Heather etc to come through and take a hold without being suffocated and outcompeted by the Bramble and Bracken. In turn if we can achieve this the biodiversity within this area will dramatically improve whilst also giving a much-improved aesthetic look to the area.

I completely understand certain members concerns about how bare the area looks. Which it will do with the intensive works that have been carried out. We have scraped away the brash layer leaving the sandy soil where we hope there is an abundance of plant species within the seed bank waiting to flourish, now we have made room for them to thrive.

We will also be coppicing some of left-over woody Gorse to 150mm. This is to encourage the dense re growth this plant requires.

Obviously, this area will need time to recover, over the next year this area will improve by the day. We will be transplanting some young Gorse plants to help re-establish the area.



(Dead & Woody Gorse smothered by invasive Bramble & Bracken between Holes 11 & 13)



(Area of Bramble & Bracken before cutting had taken place)



(Area after cutting Bramble & Bracken had taken place)



Areas of well managed Dense Clusters of Gorse, Heather, Coastal Grasses, Wild Orchids and Flowers
(Carnoustie)

I have chosen to show Carnoustie Golf Links as an example on where we need to aim to be. Carnoustie has won multiple environmental awards over the years for their management of their out of play areas. Not only does this management bring an aesthetically pleasing look to the golf course it in turn brings a thriving natural Flora and Fauna to the links. Dense clusters of well managed Gorse that will aid nesting Birds and Insects. Coastal grasses also for nesting Birds, Insects, and Lizards etc.

We have a duty to conserve the land in which we play the game. Ensuring the local Flora and Fauna are protected and where we can enhance for future generations to thrive.

The Green staff have also cut back Bramble in a couple of smaller areas left of 6 and left of 16. This can be found within our Ecological Management Plan (6C) (16C) & (16D) The management of these areas again is to reduce the bramble and bracken that is currently encroaching, killing the Grasses and Gorse.



(Area (6C) Bramble Cut Back)



(Areas of Rough Grassland and Gorse that has been lost to Bramble over the Years (16D))



(Areas of Rough Grassland and Gorse that has been lost to Bramble over the Years (16C))

Whilst carrying out the above works we have also been in regular contact with Vale Commons Council who are also trying to reduce the Bramble and Bracken encroachment across the wider areas of L'Ancrese Common. G.C.M have agreed to carry on cutting back where V.C.C have recently cut a fire break adjacent to the 9th hole and racetrack (9D). This again is to reduce Bramble and Bracken whilst aiding Gorse and other indigenous species to gain a foot hold and establish to how the common looked years ago. The V.C.C. will also be supporting us in Bracken management this summer with the loan of their roller to reduce the severity of this weed. I would like to thank the V.C.C. for the offer to loan their machine to G.C.M which will help us massively in our aim to restore the out of play areas to their former glory.



(Continued Cutting of Bramble & Bracken 9th Hole / Racetrack (9D))

I hope this will give you a brief understanding of how and why we have undertaken these works.

Hopefully the rain will cease soon, and we can get everyone out playing as soon as we possibly can.

Kind Regards

Ollie