

2021 Course AGM Report

The year from March 2020 has been like no other, with 3 extended periods of government enforced course closure amounting to huge frustration from the golfing communities across the country. I would argue however, that when play has been permitted the membership witnessed some of the best playing conditions at Durham City, certainly in the 20 years I have been a member.

Credit to Adam Lund and Jack Richardson during the original lockdown for the amount of hours and quality of the work they put in while the 3 remaining members of staff were furloughed. Whilst we heard grumblings from most other NE clubs about the standard of course they returned to, we at Durham City, were welcomed by excellent playing conditions from day 1.

Adam has built upon the very positive start to his role at the Club, increasing both the enjoyment of members and reputation of the course around the region. He continues to bring new ideas as well as tweaking changes brought in the year to April 2020. Adam has promoted Jack to Deputy Course Manager, having shown a high standard of both work and commitment to the course. This is the first time a DCGC Course Manager has had a deputy for over a decade and I'm sure the staffing structure will continue to develop in the coming years.

One major positive to come from the year is the Club's support for continued investment in the course machinery, following on from last year's replacement of the front line equipment (rough cutter, greens mower and tees mower). In 2020, we were supported by the Main Committee, to purchase the following;

- A new Kubota tractor;
- A used Toro workman utility vehicle;
- A used turf iron – to roll the greens increasing smoothness and speed;
- A used greens mower – purchased to cut the fringes and aprons; and,
- A used zero turn mower – for use in cutting the grass within the trees.

(We also invested in a used verti-drain unit, a mole plough and turf cutter).

These upgrades in machinery provide efficiencies (e.g. the zero turn units reduces time to cut all the copses from 5 days to 3), increased quality of cut and reduce downtime. The above investment represents an approximately £49,000 nett outlay. We traded in £9,500 of old or unused machinery to help towards the cost of the above. Without doubt the investment programme was well overdue and I think it is fair to say that Adam has a vastly improved set of machinery than the one that was inherited.

The start of last season began with drought-like conditions, where watering of the greens was a daily requirement in April and early May. Into late May and onwards we had a mixed summer, followed by one of the wettest winters on record, which began from the end of the second lockdown (in early December). It has been pleasing to see the drainage which has been installed over the last 5 years working well, however there can be no doubt to the value of continued investment in this area in the years to come. There is no question that we all want a course that is one of the more resilient to the increasingly heavy rainfall.

Within our annual course budget, once again we have completed a high number of the projects we set out to achieve at the start of the year, all of which serve to improve either turf conditions, operational efficiencies and/or the general aesthetic, including;

- Verti-drain all greens to 10 inches depth and apply kiln-dried sand to improve drainage;

- Replacement of the old clay drain down the 18th fairway (between chambers) to allow for future drainage additions across the fairway;
- Drain first 60-70 yards of pond hole fairway into the pond
- Installing new primary drains in the 3rd, 8th and 11th greens;
- Significant lower branch removal behind the 3rd green /4th tee;
- Tree removal adjacent to the summer 8th tree to allow re-engineering of the ditch and open the tee up to more sunlight;
- Reshaping of bunkers each bunker on the 1st, 5th and 7th holes; and,
- Infilling and shaping of the rarely used bunker behind the 12th green with arisings.

In September we appointed an Irrigation Consultant to review aging irrigation system and provide a feasibility assessment for the future water supply to our course. In summary, the report commented that our system is very rudimentary and was well past its life expectancy and the Club should plan for a new system. Costed options were provided within the report. The Committee should face up to the simple fact course irrigation investments will have to be committed sooner rather than later to enable Adam to maintain healthy surfaces over the summer months.

I would like to thank the course staff and the Committee for their hard work and support and finally a big thank you to the people who have volunteered their time on the course over the past year, it is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank our outgoing Treasurer for his strong support of Adam and the Course Committee as well as his fiscally sensible decisions in a turbulent year for the Club.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the Course Committee and almost 2 years spent working with Adam as Course Chairman; helping with the transition from our previous Course Manager as well as a large overhaul of both equipment and procedure during that time. Having now stepped down due to differences of opinion with the Main Committee regarding the future management of the Club, I now look forward to simply playing the product laid out for us members, as well as seeing the future development of this beautiful golfing layout by Browney.

Matthew Harper

Course Chairman (to January 2021)

ADD GEORGE'S TEXT HERE and undersign separately.