



## Course Update and Future Maintenance Plans - November 2017

Over the last couple of weeks, we have unfortunately experienced a number of course closures due to the, what seems never ending, heavy rainfall. Our priority is to have the course open for play as much as we can - but there are times where the weather just hasn't made this possible.

This summer, if we can call it that, has seen the highest amount of rainfall in 32 years. This has taken its toll on the course, especially the fairways. On the back of this we have recently had a walk round with an independent advisor where we took core samples from the fairways to understand what was happening below the surface. We have also taken samples from the greens and they have been tested. From this a programme of works will be developed. Below is some of the issues that have been picked up and the course of action that has been proposed.

### Fairways

- Due to the high volume of water it has increased the amount of worm activity - which in turn has caused issues with mud collecting on Power Caddies, Trolleys and Golfers. As worms are very important to create pore spaces it should be noted that out of 27 varieties, there are only 3 that cast and the products to suppress these are no longer available.
- This worm activity will mean the sward is smothered by mud and will affect any cutting that requires to be done when weather permits.

Remedial Action - We are trialling products to reduce the impact of the worms on the surface of the fairways and green surrounds. This will make the organic matter unpalatable for them and force them further below ground.

- The high rainfall has also contributed to the build-up of thatch on the surface of the Fairways. This is reducing the speed at which the water can get down through the profile into the primary drainage system. From the core samples taken from the Fairways it shows that the soil is friable below the top two inches if thatch so it is necessary to link the top surface to the soil by aeration.

Remedial Action - Verti-Drain Fairways and Walk Off Areas to reduce compaction and improve water flow from the surface of the fairways into the drainage system. This is something we had planned and will be carried out as soon as conditions allow.

We will also be top dressing the landing areas on the fairways to make these firmer and reduce the thatch layer.

It has also been recommended to trial a product called Gypsum. This will help to flocculate the soil and help with pH adjustment which will discourage the worms.

A fertilizing programme has been put in place to improve the density of the grass on the fairways creating a thicker sward which will help to reduce water retention. This will create a better playing surface going forward.

### Ditches

- During the summer this year you will have noticed that on the 10<sup>th</sup> we trialed a product on the banks of the ditches to kill off all the grass. This not only speeds up play by making it easier to find your ball it helps to encourage the water to be free flowing. It has been recommended to carry on this works to all the main ditches round the course. There will also be ongoing works to ensure these ditches are kept clear of debris.

### Greens

- When taking the samples, the Greens had just been scarified and were overall a very good putting surface. There were some signs of moss infestations on high spots and green edges which would be expected given the rainfall this summer. This can be tackled by using these areas for hole positions and regular verti-cutting along with increasing the height of cut to make the plant less stressed.
- There was a small amount of thatch present at 30mm and this should be diluted by hollow coring and top dressing on a more regular basis. STRI recommended yearly applications are 100 to 180 tonne per annum, and this would be completed after each verti cut during the playing season.

Remedial Action - Hollow Coring, Over Seeding and Top Dressing have begun, and A Feeding Programme based on the Soil Analysis results has been developed and will be put in place for the Greens and Tees.

### Summary

It has been a frustrating summer for us all and we are determined to do what we can to improve the course into 2018 and beyond.

As we work through the actions identified we would like to ask for your patience and understanding. We will try to keep any disruption to a minimum and minimise machinery movement on the course during periods of wet weather.

As in previous years the Fairways will be closed through the winter season. Play off the fairways will only be possible by using a mat. These are available to purchase from reception for £7.50 or alternatively can be hired for £6.00 with a £5.00 refundable deposit.

We would also discourage where possible the use of Trolleys throughout the winter - especially electric trolleys. I appreciated some require a trolley to get around the course and we will allow members to hire a push trolley from reception for free rather than using their electric trolley.

Both measures above are aimed at protecting the course throughout the winter months and we would appreciate your understanding and cooperation. If you do see anyone playing from the fairways without a mat please report it to Sandy, Myself or another member of staff.

Many areas will also be roped off through the winter to manage the wear and traffic flow round the course. Please stick to these at all times.

The New Greenkeepers Shed which we previously told you about will start to take shape over the coming months which will allow us to house a new fleet of equipment for the start of the 2018 season. This will be a significant improvement on our Greenkeeping Facilities and will improve the storage of machinery and materials going forward.

As always if you have any questions on the above please get in touch.

Kind Regards,

Mike Holley  
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