

Brightmet Golf Club

Greens Report

April 2022

Steven Clarke

Head Greenkeeper

This report is intended to keep the members of the Greens Committee informed on the work that has been undertaken since our last meeting and to update you on the work I have planned for the future.

Greens and Course

The greens have been healthy through Winter with little disease scaring or loss of coverage. This has allowed us to begin the season with some light aeration work. I wanted to avoid undertaking anything too aggressive and invasive early-on in the year in case of a hot-dry spell, which did occur, as it has the last few Springtimes. I undertook an 8mm solid tine to a depth of 50mm, to allow air into the soil profile and allow CO₂ and other gases caused from respiration to escape. This also allows water to move into the soil profile allowing better drainage through the thatch layer near the surface.

We also undertook a light verti-cut at around -2/-3mm, which helps to refine the elongated leaf tissue that occurs at the Winter growing height. As the vertical blade is below the surface level, it also begins the on-going practice of removing the organic material in the thatch layer that causes issues with water retention and soft putting surfaces.

This process takes two days to complete over the 19 greens. Once it had been finished, the greens were dressed with 8-10 Tonnes of specialised top-dressing sand. This fills-in the holes to create drainage channels through the soil profile, fills-in the channels left from the verti-cut to begin to dilute the thatch and provides a smooth surface for the start of the season.

More invasive thatch reduction and heavier dressings will be applied through the season when there is better recovery due more growth, higher soil temperatures and nutrient availability.

We have begun our 2022 greens nutritional program from ICL. I have chosen an entire program with ICL that was affordable within the defined maintenance budget. Unlike using more expensive suppliers that would have meant choosing elements of the program and hoping for good results.

The tees that have been used through the Winter for General play suffered quite badly with wear. These have been solid tined, over-seeded with a hardy Dwarf Rye-grass seed, top-dressed, dragged in and fertilised. This will promote thickening up, growth and recovery. Weaker and barer areas on the greens will also be done later in the year when greens seed varieties (browntop bent, highland bent, creeping bent and fescues) will have better chance of germination and survival. The tees rye-seed can sit in the soil profile until conditions are right and begin germination as it is more resilient.

All areas of the course have now been mown and all playing areas will now be maintained as required dependent on growth as we move into the main playing season.

The newly established Blue tee areas have now been defined. The extended areas on fairways are to be incorporated where possible and maintained when ground conditions and weather allow.

Bunkers

The bunker work has now been completed. The 12th, 13th and 16th bunkers have been turfed and sanded. These are now back in play. The newly laid turf and seeded areas are still GUR until becoming established.

The 17th has been filled-in and seeded.

The 6th has been reduced in size by around 3m on the back edge. The banking has been seeded and fresh sand in the base. If it is still the intention to remove this bunker and fill it in then work will have to be undertaken earlier in the year (Sept-Oct) when it is possible to allow access for machinery and equipment.

The 9th ditch has been topped up with rootzone and seeded. The rope will be brought in when the seed has established.

I am hoping for quick germination and in-fill of these areas, some of the seed on the bankings have started germinating already so fingers crossed.

As the cost of constructing these bunkers has come from the course maintenance budget, some of the bankings and other areas have not been turfed due to financial constraints.

Machinery

All winter servicing has been undertaken on our machinery fleet. The main greens units and tees units have been re-ground with new bottom blades fitted.

I am still awaiting the replacement fairway mower from Balmers. The finance has been agreed and signed for, Balmers are currently servicing the mower and readying it for delivery.

I am unsure of the delivery of the new tractor, I believe that finance arrangement is still being discussed prior to it being signed over.

A wear / tear issue has occurred on the Gator truck. The front wheel bearing has collapsed. This requires to be taken away for repair to Balmers. I am hoping for a temporary loan of another vehicle so we still have transport for getting around the course.

As the machinery purchases have been agreed for 2022, I feel a full review and replacement program needs to be undertaken for all of the equipment; year of purchase, hours of use on machine, expected annual hours of use and priority on the course. The aim being to ensure that we can have a rolling stock of purchases and equipment and reduce spikes in repairs and replacement expenditure.

Irrigation

The irrigation is still switched off, but the start-up is to be undertaken in the next week or so. During this time we will check for any issues from the Winter, replace and re-set any damaged heads and replace some of the damaged valve boxes. All of the heads and boxes will be trimmed around to ensure they will work effectively when required.

Staff

There are no issues with the staff.

Our new-starter Liam is still on the government funded Kick-start scheme. His placement will end on Friday 13th May. After this he is to be employed directly with the club on the same contract and hours as the rest of the staff.

Winter Planning for 22/23

The key priorities for end of the season are

- 3rd fairway drain - replace collapsed / blocked drain with new solid pipe
- 2nd green - install drain either prior to green to prevent surface water running onto the putting surface or install additional lateral drains across the green similar to the one on the left-hand side.
- Ladies 8th and 2nd tees - strip turf, level with rootzone and return
- Continue filling-in large bunker on 6th
- 1st greenside bunkers - re-draining and re-sanding. These bunkers don't currently drain well and give a poor first impression of the course.

All work requires full costings and ensuring that work can be carried out at a suitable time of year allowing for machinery, materials and equipment to gain access to areas required.

Trees

The tree surgeon Ashley Edge is working on-site on Friday 22nd April. He is going to undertake a clearance of the tree stumps around the course from trees that have been felled through the winter.

Another area that has been identified is pruning the Laurel hedge around the practice net.

The main problem trees we have out on the course I would suggest for removal would be the 3 large Manchester Poplars at the start of the 2nd fairway / 3rd dogleg. During the storms through Winter there was a large amount of dead material falling from them. They are too large for us to undertake in-house.

Similarly, the large dead Poplar in the Car Park near to the bungalow and Ladies locker room. This one may be covered by a TPO, but it may be worth checking with the relevant authority as it is posing a danger.

If anyone has any pressing issues regarding trees that require attention, please let it be known so it can be discussed prior to and possibly rectified on 22nd April.

Events

As we move into the season, may I request that any dates for Matches / Opens / Exchange days or Corporate Hospitality Events are given to me as early as possible. This allows me to schedule maintenance work on the course without causing any interference and also ear-marks periods through the year where staff can take annual leave.

I currently have the Men's Thursday match schedule, but if there are any others available I can add those dates to our annual maintenance schedule.

I hope this provides a good overview of the work that has been carried out and what plans there are in place for the season ahead. I look forward to discussing any matters arising at the next greens meeting.

Steven Clarke

Head Greenkeeper