



1832

**NORTH BERWICK  
WEST LINKS**

## Course Report – June

### Course Update

As I write this on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, I think this is the first day in what feels like months where we haven't had a strong Easterly wind bringing a chilly feel and has helped to "whick" all moisture out of the surfaces. We have a proper "true links" aesthetic on the West Links which is great to see, but a solid day of rain wouldn't go a miss – if you haven't gathered already, greenkeepers are never happy!

It might not look like it, but we have been irrigating every night of the week but with high Evapotranspiration (ET) rates and the Easterly wind, it has been tough to keep moisture in the ground, but this is where we see the benefits of our wetting agent programme which helps to keep the rootzone moist which will encourage root development/growth.

The greens have been performing a lot better since we have had a bit more heat in the ground and increased growth. We did a lot of preparation for the Club Championship weekends with the greens getting Verti-cut, groomed, a lower height of cut and increased rolling by our 2 new rollers which arrived at the end of May. We have waited 2 years for these units to come in and they have made an instant impact to improve ball roll. We aerated with the Pro-Core and GXi8 with the holes filling in fairly quickly. Following the North Berwick Championship weekend, we applied a slow-release granular fertiliser to the tees (N:18, P:5, K:18) which will release nutrient over a 5-month period, and then applied a granular to the greens (N:6, P:0, K:27) to boost growth and recovery after a busy few weeks.



*Figure 1: Solid tine holes from the Pro-Core which healed in just over a week.*

## Club Championship Weekends

We would like to pass on our congratulations to all of those that participated in the Club Championship weekends, most notably:

### North Berwick Golf Club

- Club Champions – Louise Martin and Chris Wood.
- Plate Champions – Fiona Whittock and Mike Livingston
- B Champions – Patricia Phillips and Ivor McArdle
- Gents Seniors Champion – Graham Clark

### Tantallon Golf Club

- Club Champion – Duncan Searle
- B Champion – Paul Howson
- Salver Winner – Gareth Pugh
- Senior Champion – Nial Gemmell

At the start of the year, we identified certain events along with the Committees that we wanted to elevate in terms of importance to the Clubs. Obviously, the Club Championships fell in this category, and we were delighted with the feedback received on the course conditions and the small attentions to detail such as the painted holes and the paced-out pin sheets – unfortunately, we couldn't do anything about the wind.



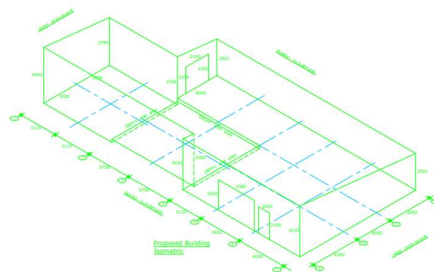
*Figure 2: Daniel Taylor changing holes whilst being filmed.*



*Figure 3: Painting holes on a beautiful Saturday evening.*

### **Bulk Material Building**

Work will finally start on the rebuilding of the Bulk Material Building on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June after a year and a half of planning. Bell Building Projects will arrive on site on the 19<sup>th</sup> and will start excavating a compound for their machinery and welfare facilities which is expected to take 2 weeks for them to move in fully. Demolition of the existing building is scheduled for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Along with the contractors, we will try and keep disruption to a minimum whilst the rebuild is underway but there will be increased traffic coming down our access road and lots of deliveries.



*Figure 4: Plans for the new Bulk Materials Building*

### **Mowing Lines on Fairways**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of June, we started widening out fairway across the site. There are many areas that are felt to be too tight (3<sup>rd</sup> hole), bunkers not on the fairway (3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> holes) and opening up the bunkers more removing semi rough obstructing them (11<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> holes). This is very much a work in progress and will require a bit of tweaking. As we are



also awaiting our third fairway mower, we have to be realistic of how much we can cut in a day.



*Figure 5: New fairway lines on the 8<sup>th</sup> widening the fairway and bring the bunkers more into play.*



*Figure 6: The bunker on 3 brought back into the fairway.*

### Burns

The burns on the site have been problematic for quite some time now and it has been commented on by many golfers about how a ball will disappear as soon as it enters the burn under a layer of algae, weeds or silt. We have attempted over the last few weeks to clean

them out as best as we can, but until we can remove a lot of the silt content from the burns and increase the water flow/improve the fall, we will keep doing our best to keep them as clean as possible. Going forward, I would like to see them cleaned out properly with a layer of gravel on the bottom to help line the burn and prevent silt build up or aquatic weeds from growing. We have also engaged with a professional spraying company to come in and spray the aquatic weeds legally with an appropriate product.

### Looking Ahead

We are obviously limited to what we can do just now in terms of weather as we don't want to push things too hard during a period of heat stress. We will continue to apply wetting agents to all surfaces to try and keep an element of moisture. If the weather does turn wet for a brief period and we get a flush of growth, we will brush all surfaces to stand any lateral lying grasses up before mowing. Using a sarrel roller (a roller with 1.5" spikes) on the greens will help to break any surface tension and allow water to infiltrate through the surface. We will also look to get an overseed on the greens using a dimple seeder to try and work a bit more fescue into the surfaces – again dependent on the weather.



*Figure 7: New roots developing and growing down into the rootzone.*



## Pin Prism Reflectors

As you might have noticed on top of the pins, we have placed a small attachment that helps to reflect lasers from range finders to make it easier to find yardages. There are 6 reflectors on each attachment so they should always be visible and easy to direct a range finder towards.



*Figure 8: New Prism Reflectors on each of the pins.*

## Hot Topic – Evapotranspiration

Evapotranspiration (ET) is the rate of moisture lost from the soil to the atmosphere. It will obviously be a lot higher in the warmer months compared to the cooler months so ET is very minimal in the wintertime although a cold, dry and windy start to spring will help to reduce moisture in the surfaces. The heat from the sun and wind in the warmer months can take anything from 3mm to 6mm of moisture out of the ground. As we manage moisture on greens quite closely with irrigation and wetting agent applications, we can see a bit of stress on the greens on high spots such as the bankings on the 16<sup>th</sup> green.

Fairways are harder to manage as they cover a larger area, and the irrigation isn't as targeted as it is on the greens. We could apply 3mm of irrigation to the fairways during the night, and by midday the following day, that 3mm is lost to the atmosphere which helps to give us our dry "true links" aesthetics. The irrigation system doesn't cover many areas that we would like it to such as green surrounds, walkways, carries, yellow tees or winter tees which means maintaining these areas during a period of heat stress is difficult with no irrigation points for hand watering nearby or the fact we have a limited supply of water, and we need to concentrate irrigation application on the main playing surfaces.

As I said before, greenkeepers are never happy. It always seems to be either too wet or too dry, especially on the East Lothian coast. When I say to people, I'm desperate for a day of rain, it's because at this moment in time we are in a moisture deficit with only 196mm of rain so far this year. Our year-to-date ET is currently at 244mm which means we have lost nearly 50mm more moisture to the atmosphere rather than rainfall falling onto the ground.

Kyle Cruickshank, Course Manager