



COURSE MANAGER REPORT JANUARY 2022

Happy new year from myself and the greenstaff and despite the seemingly never-ending pandemic I think there are plenty reasons to be positive for the 2022 playing season. Despite a difficult 2021 in many different ways, we have made lots of progress in every department and with a full tee sheet of members, visitors, and of course final qualifying for the AIG Women's Open Championship at Muirfield, we are excited to showcase our fantastic links course.

Our greens surfaces are in rude health (see figure 1) moving into what has been the first truly cold snap of the winter. With last season's rigorous aeration, thatch dilution, judicial watering, and a more strategic approach to plant nutrition we believe we have set the foundation for further improvement in playing conditions for the season ahead and if the weather is kind around March, then I am confident we will hit the ground running this year after last years cold and dry spring – more on that later....



Figure 1. Good coverage, minimal disease pressure and favourable plant orientation on our 7th green

Tee renovation program

As discussed previously we are about embark on year one of our tee levelling program and while it may not seem like a priority to some of our members at this time, I am confident that once we see and compare the end-product to our current state in terms of playability and presentation that the end will justify the means.

The first two tees identified are 5th and 10th.

5th tee

The longest of all the tees on the course the 5th tee is also the most uneven by quite some distance. The scope of works will include stripping the existing turf for re-use around the golf course, laser levelling of the entire tee, utilising the existing rootzone and re-turfing with an imported fescue/dwarf rye mix. We will soften the gradient of the slope at the rear of the tee to allow for a more forgiving passage up to the intended new tee path along the left-hand side of the tee (see figure 2) This new path should alleviate the wear caused at the bottle neck between the green and the left-hand side bunker on the 4th green. We would propose to keep the existing path as a service route for maintenance to the green and tee, leaving the top path in the best possible condition for golfers and caddies only.



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Figure 2. 5th tee proposed new path



10th tee

This area requires quite a bit more work in that we are forced to remove around 115m³ of rootzone on the right-hand side tee. During the last construction phase poor and unsuitable material was utilised as rootzone (see figure 3) which has since led to drainage issues after what would ordinarily be negligible amounts of rainfall on the free draining links.



Figure 3. The clay-based subsoil can be easily distinguished from the upper sand rootzone, it is this bottom section which requires removal

When any construction project is carried out it is imperative that the sand/soil mix is laboratory tested for infiltration rates of water from the surface to the subsoil or drainage. Where a clay-based soil is used the smaller particles bind together dramatically slowing down the drainage rate of water causing the surface puddling we witness at 10. These issues are more commonly found on the inland sites where of course the fertile parkland courses are built on clay – one of the many reasons we

are fortunate on the links!!

After excavation the scope of works will be similar to the 5th tee where we will recycle the turf on top to areas already identified on the course, level, and re-turf. The path through the middle will be removed to create one whole tee with a new path installed at the right-hand side (see figure 4). Marram grass will then be planted tee-side of the path camouflaging the path in a way which is natural and in keeping with the links environment.



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Figure 4. One tee level and a more subtle path will improve this corner of the course

We are hopeful the project will commence at the start of February although this is entirely dependant on the supply chain and how quickly we can source materials. Once the turf is laid, we will be required to rest the tee to fully allow the turf to knit together and this would entail the forward yellow tee being utilised at 5th and the bottom winter tees at 10th.

It is important to point out to the Committee that there is no way to predict exactly how quickly the tees will remain on a temporary position, last year we did not see consistent steady growth until the end of May (see figure 5), therefore it is possible it would be May before these new teeing areas will be back in full play.



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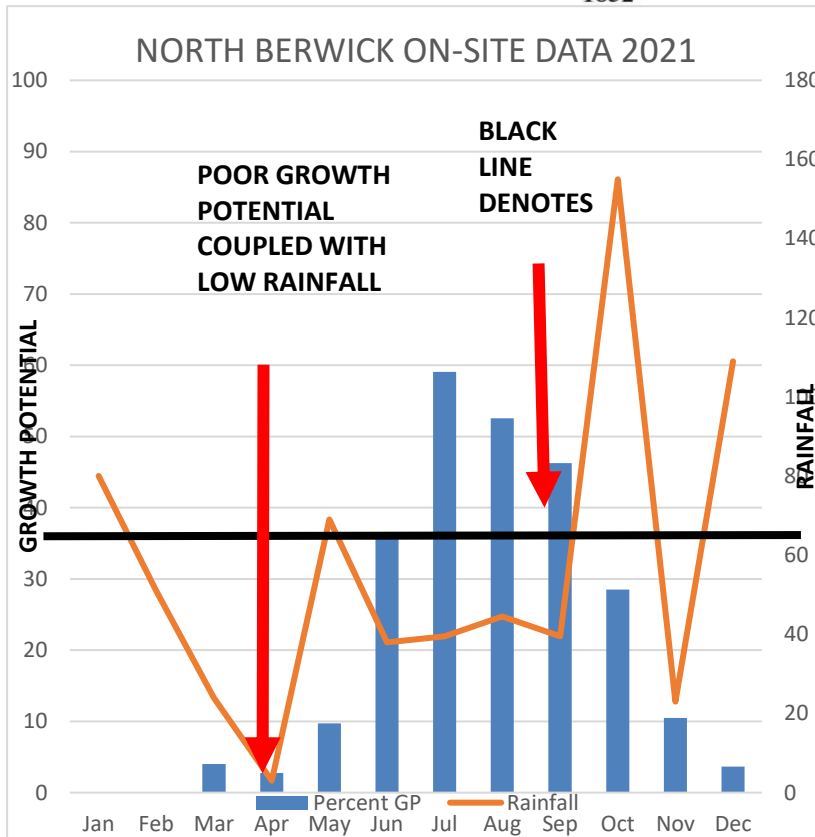


Figure 5. Last years data shows exactly why we had a slow start to the season

Growth

As we can see from the above chart, growth conditions were not conducive to growing grass in a consistent manner almost until June. April in particular was the worst of the whole year where not only did we record the coldest average temperature but also the lowest rainfall by some distance at a paltry 3mm. This is becoming more of a theme; in the past we would put the mowers away from October-March.

Now we are seeing grass growing right up until the end of November and not kickstarting again fully until May.

In respect of the tee’s, we would hope to get the ‘false spring’ around March, which would help the turf take root and allow us to move back to the full tees quicker. As with most renovation tasks I have spoken about, we would most certainly see this as short-term pain for a whole lot of gain.

Traffic management

As with any golf course during periods of slow growth it is vital to protect vulnerable areas of turf if we are to expect the golf course to come through the winter period in the best possible condition. This includes pinch points at 3 and 16 as well as rough areas at and 8 and 13. Ropes and hoops will remain in place until such times as the growth picks up allowing for recovery from traffic. We are very grateful to our members for adhering to the temporary routes around the course.

Darren McLaughlan, Course Manager