



Course Report – July 2024

Current Conditions

Apparently, it is “summer” although we have only had the odd day where it has felt like summer. Saturday 13th of July felt like Autumn had begun with a high temperature of 13°C and a low of 11°C with 5mm of rain thrown in to make it even more miserable for those playing in the All-Clubs Challenge Medals or who were watching the Scottish Open at the Renaissance Club.

Once again, it has been great to see many European Tour or PGA Tour pros playing around the West Links as well as caddies and TV commentators too. We are truly fortunate to have a big event on our doorstep but also to showcase our special site to the world.

After taking a break for the Club Championship weekends, topdressing greens restarted on the 17th of June, and we have now top-dressed all the greens and approaches 5 times applying approximately 180 tons to date. The “little and often” approach will make a big difference to both the overall health of the greens, helping to dilute the thatch layer, but also for playability by levelling out any uneven areas and improving ball roll. We are now undertaking weekly light weekly verti-cutting which helps to cut any lateral growth on the greens and to further refine the surface to improve ball roll. We are also at the time of year when ryegrass stalks are popping up around the course and by verti-cutting greens, we will start to cut a lot of these down.



Figure 1: Topdressing in action on the 4th Green

These stalks are present on the fairways too which is a bit more difficult to manage. Currently, we do not have any equipment that will cut them down or rip them out. We had a breakdown on our Semi-

Rough mower (now repaired and back in action) which we would normally set the cutting height to 1 inch, helping to reduce these stalks.

The reason our mowers cannot catch them is that the stalks are so long, the front roller on the cutting unit flattens it and there is not enough space for the stalk to spring back up in time to be cut by the cylinder cutting blade. We are now in the process of converting our old fairway mowers units into verti-cutting units which will help to keep these stalks down going forward.



Figure 2: Ryegrass stalk growing on a green.

During the week of the 8th of July, we took advantage of the wet weather and sprayed a curative wetting agent on all of the recently cut-out areas between greens and tees and also areas around the course that were quite bare and weak such as the hump in front of the green on 18 and round a few bunkers. We then spread some slow-release fertiliser on these areas to try and promote growth and recovery. We will also start verti-cutting these areas to refine, followed by topdressing.

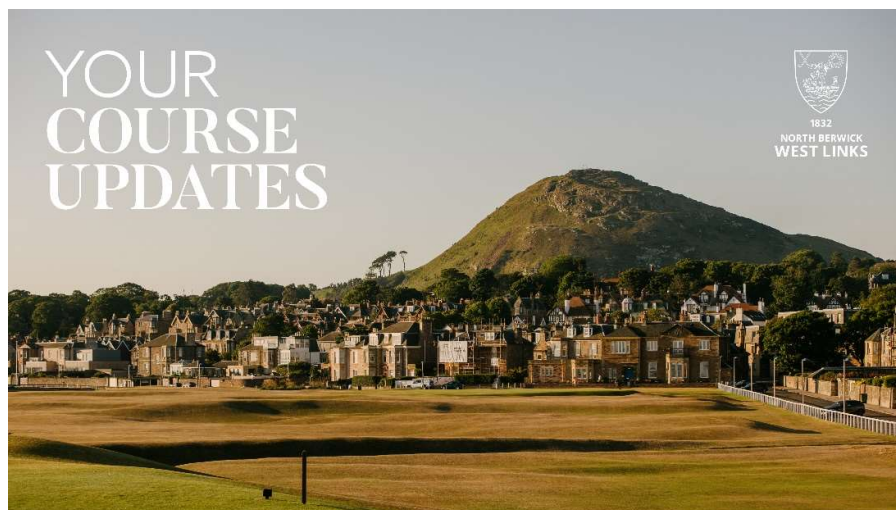
Gent's Captain – Shadow Day

On Weds 3rd of July, Gent's Captain, Gordon Scholes joined the team at 0430 to shadow us during course set-up and to see how we navigate ourselves around the course in the morning. Gordon divided his time between most members of the staff and got a good understanding of what we do and why we do it. We found it hugely beneficial to have Gordon here as he was very engaged, was not shy about asking questions and even answered a few questions from the team. Gordon added that his key reflection and takeaway was "how much work is involved by the Team in setting up the course so play can commence at 7am".



Video Updates

Some of you may have seen on Stuart Bayne's weekly Friday Update, from the 12th of July we have started to record some updates for members on some of the work we are doing. One of the team, Scott Russell, has a background in media and has done an excellent job filming and editing a short update which can be found by clicking on the image below. A small interview with Gordon highlighting more of his thoughts is also on this update.



GEO Beach Walk

On Wednesday 10th of July, we took part in a beach clean from the Harbour up to the 2nd hole. This was organized by the Golf Environmental Organisation (GEO), and we were invited along with representatives from the Sea Bird Centre and East Lothian Coastal Rangers to talk about our roles and responsibilities for protecting our environment. We were also interviewed by European Tour Productions for a short film talking about the challenges we face with coastal erosion and what we can do to protect the course. This will help to raise awareness about our coastal erosion issues and what many other golf courses are facing. This video can be found by clicking on the image below.



Tournament Support

The next few weeks have been, and will continue to be exciting for some of the team as they work on support at tournaments. Daniel Taylor, Course Supervisor, has been over at Royal Troon working with the BIGGA Open Support Team where he walked with different games, raking any bunkers they go into.

Graeme Nisbet is at the JCB Golf and Country Club in Staffordshire this week for the LIV Golf event assisting the greenkeeping team. Ryan Yuill is heading to East Lake in Atlanta, Georgia for the PGA Tour Championship at the end of August. We are delighted to be able to send team members to these events to help their development and to experience something a bit different.

Staff Updates

Unfortunately, we are losing two team members in August. Lewis Connell has taken up a greenkeeping position at Muirfield and Gary Brown is leaving to become Deputy Course Manager at West Linton Golf Club. Although we are disappointed to be losing them, we wish them all the very best in the next stages of their careers. We have placed an advert online and have already begun the recruitment process.

Rainfall Chart - As of 15th of July 2024

	2021	2022	2023	2024
January	80.0	20	26.2	48.1
February	51.0	66	33	47.2
March	24.0	19	78.4	73.6
April	3.0	41	34	98.4
May	69.0	48	24.39	98.8
June	38.0	24	43.6	34
July	39.5	36	48	33.6
August	44.5	21	37.4	
September	39.5	67	50.4	
October	155.0	56	152.6	
November	23.0	94	89.54	
December	109.0	23	108.4	
Total	675.5	515	725.93	433.7

Kyle Cruickshank
Course Manager