



Course Report – August 2024

Current Conditions

There is already an Autumnal feel, and we are only halfway through August with cooler temperatures and darker mornings. There have been a few sunny and hot days which have helped to finally put the summer shine on the course which has been late to appear after such a wet first half of the year. The warm weather has helped to “stunt” the growth of the grass providing a tighter cut with minimal removal of grass clippings of the greens.

Over the last few weeks, we have been pencil tining the greens with 6mm tines followed by a roll. We have done this in 3-week blocks with holes 1,2,15-18 completed first followed by holes 3-6,12-14 and finishing with holes 7-11 this week. By doing the greens in this way, we are less disruptive to golfers, and we can complete these greens on a Monday morning without golf catching us.



Figure 1: Pro-Core on the 1st green.

We have also been topdressing greens and approaches utilising the Monday mornings to always get some kind of maintenance work completed. We will verti-cut greens over the next few weeks until our maintenance window in September which I will go into more detail on.

Golf Green Health Indexing Results

Every year, we send soil samples away to the European Turfgrass Laboratory (ETL) based in Alloa, where they undertake a suite of tests to benchmark our year-on-year performance and health indexing of selected greens. A report is then compiled called the Golf Green Health Indexing Report. This shows the year-on-year improvements or areas to work on. We send our samples away in the middle of July which means we are always comparing the samples at the same time of year.

In summary, the simple message is our greens are continuing to improve and we are now seeing the benefits on the surface with improved playing surfaces. I have listed below a more technical and detailed overview of the results:

- Organic Matter in the 0-20mm layer of the green staying the same, but decreasing as we go deeper into 20-40mm, 40-60mm and 60-80mm layers.
- Saturated Hydraulic Conductivity (the rate at which water penetrates the soil) has dropped slightly as well as Water Retention and Water-Filled Porosity. This is most likely due to our target soil moisture content rising from 10-15% last year to 20% this year. Even though this has decreased, we are still classed as “good” on the scale.
- Nutrients required for healthy growth, are all above the Minimal Level for Sustainable Nutrition (MLSN) threshold apart from Phosphorus in a couple of greens. Magnesium is classed as “high” but still acceptable.
- The pH is still too high (7.2 – 7.8) but this is most likely due to the irrigation water’s pH being at 7.8.

To help simplify and illustrate this above, I have listed below visual descriptions of the data where the outer ring is the best classification. Compared to 2021, we are moving towards the outer ring consistently year on year.

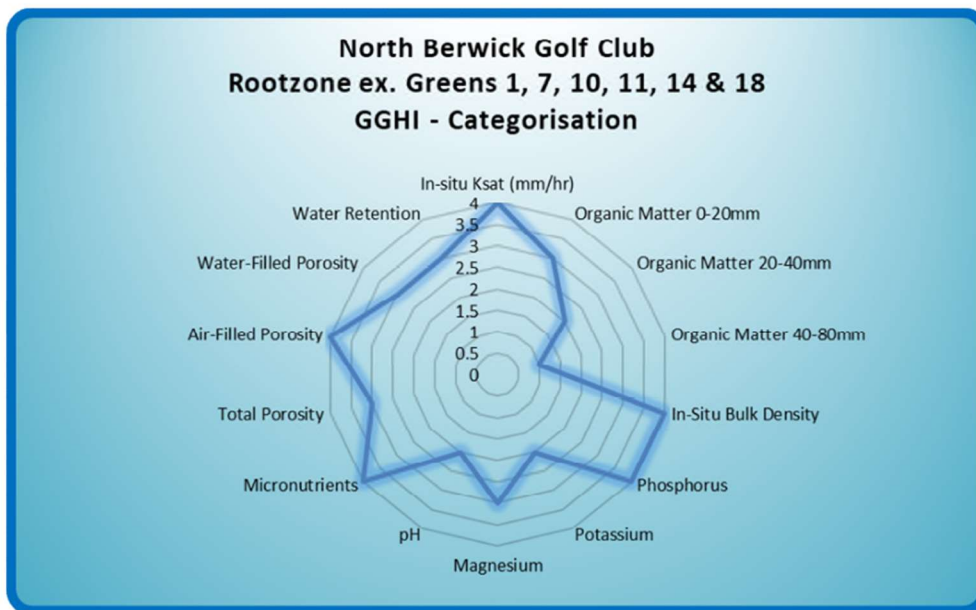


Figure 2: 2021 visual description of testing results on greens.

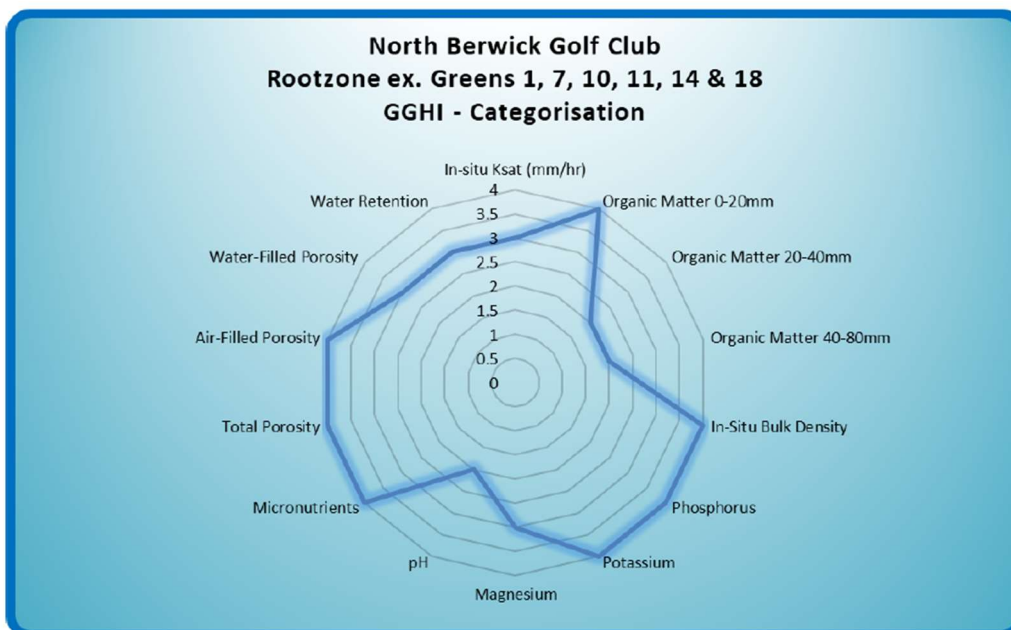


Figure 3: 2024 visual description of testing results on greens.

September Maintenance Window

After looking at these results, we can plan for our work to take place during the September Maintenance week. As I have spoken about in previous reports, we are now in phase 2 out of 3 of renovation work on the greens.

- *Phase 1* – Organic matter removal, invasive aeration, cultural changes including reducing irrigation and fertiliser inputs. In essence, removing unwanted material from the greens
- *Phase 2* – Increased seeding, continued dilution of the organic matter through topdressing, and less invasive maintenance.
- *Phase 3* – Maintaining – Continue establishment of seed and refinement of surface.

Although we are in Phase 2, this does not mean that we can just stop doing certain practices on the greens but rather we do not have to be as aggressive with how we target the surfaces. We will continue to Dry-Ject (injecting sand with minimal surface disruption) the greens in March, however, that will be the only practice we undertake on the greens as the cold springs are not aiding the recovery of the surfaces. This means that our only real opportunity to do any kind of work on the greens is in September when we have a better climate for recovery and a better chance of germination of fescue.

The plan for September Maintenance week is:

Greens

- Pro-core greens and approaches with a blunt 10mm tine to create a good “pot” for seed to drop into and for good “seed to soil” contact.
- Overseed with Fescue seed to be dragged into the holes.
- Topdress and drag to fill holes with sand.
- Double Roll Greens
- Irrigate as required.
- Once germination of seed starts to show, greens and approaches will be fertilised with a granular fertiliser.

Tees

- Disc Seed tees with Dwarf Ryegrass/Fescue mix using Vredo.
- Topdress
- Once germination of seed starts to show, greens and approaches will be fertilised with a granular fertiliser.

Fairways

- Rake fairways with Tractor Mounted Rake.
- Verti-cut fairways with debris blown.
- Mow fairways.
- Disc Seed with Fescue mix using Vredo.

We thank all members and visitors for their patience whilst the greens are in recovery following this process. We undertake this kind of work to improve the condition and playability of the putting surfaces and as I mentioned before, we are making great progress on this front.

Staff Update

We have three new recruits that will be starting in August and September.

Ryan Fox started with us in mid-August and has decided on a career change from working in tree management. Although not a similar job on paper, he has some good transferable skills, and we will look to train and develop him going forward.

Harry Pagan will start at the beginning of September and is currently working as a Groundsman at Newcastle United FC. He has some previous experience working on a golf course and is keen to transition back to greenkeeping.

Keith Reid will also join us at the beginning of Sept and is currently Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Haddington GC. We look forward to Harry and Keith joining Ryan and the rest of the team in September, adding to the depth of skills within the Team.

This now brings the Team to 14 and provides us with the cover and volume required to help ensure we can present and deliver the West Links in the best possible condition. Thank you to Stuart Bayne (GM), Douglas Tainsh (Treasurer), the Committees and the Members for the continued support and investment in the Team, which will help to support the continued improvement across all playing surfaces.

We were also delighted that Scott Russell and Jeff O'Malley passed their Pesticide Application 2 – Boom Spraying assessment on the 12th of August. We have a commitment to our staff to make sure they are continuing to develop their skills and have the necessary experience to undertake tasks such as spraying and fertilising. We now have put 7 members of the team through their PA2 course with all 7 gaining certification.

Rainfall Chart

As of the 19th of August 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	46.8
August	44.5	21	37.4	25
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	461.2

Kyle Cruickshank
Course Manager