



## August Course Report

### Current Conditions

In total, July gave us 48mm of rainfall, which has helped the course to bounce back after the early season dry spell. At the time of writing (15<sup>th</sup> of August), we had 22mm of rain with some humid conditions. With all the rainfall and the applications, we have applied to the course, grass coverage is good, growth is consistent, and recovery is much quicker however that lovely “links aesthetic” that we had earlier in the summer has gone with the course looking greener than I would normally like it but is still playing firm with lots of run on the fairway and a decent bounce on the greens. Growth Potential (GP) has continued to be good coming out of the peak maximum temperatures.

There was some disease pressure in the last month with some Red Thread; a fungal disease that is present in low fertility or nitrogen deficient turf which often is used as an indicator to apply a fertiliser which we managed to control by applying a foliar fertiliser of Ammonium Sulphate (Nitrogen source) and Ferrous Sulphate (Iron) to the greens.



*Figure 1: Red Thread on the 18<sup>th</sup> green*

### Overseeding and Aeration Works

As part of our continued plan to improve the quality of the surfaces, mainly the greens, we have been out with the Toro Pro-Core to solid-tine the greens and approaches using an 8mm tine. This helps to increase the airflow and oxygen content in the soil, break up any compaction and help to aid water movement into the rootzone in conjunction with our wetting agent programme. The new heavier rollers that we took delivery of at the start of the season now really help us in presenting the

surfaces as you'd expected, within a couple of days which makes the whole process less invasive and less obvious than it has been in the past.

We have also overseeded the greens with BAR All Bent which is a browntop bent mixture. Browntop bent is widely sown on greens to help out-compete the Poa Annua, has a fine leaf density and along with the Fescue that we sow, will help to provide a better surface going forward which will be more disease and drought-tolerant.

### Bulk Materials Building

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, the steelwork for the Bulk Material Building arrived on site with the main pillars being installed on the same day. The crane will be onsite for a total of 3 days in which the entire steel frame of the building should be put in place. We thank all golfers and members of the public for using an alternative route whilst this work was in progress as it is not safe for people to be around the crane with very heavy steel beams being lifted overhead.

The project overall is roughly 10 days behind schedule as the contractors had issues digging out the foundations due to the sandy soil. They had to excavate down between 1300-1500mm below ground to find denser sand to pour the foundations into. The contractors are confident they will make up this time as the project goes on by carrying out some tasks simultaneously which should help them finish by their scheduled date of the 30<sup>th</sup> of October.



*Figure 2: Steel framework being installed.*

## Turf Nursery

This week should see the completion of the Turf Nursery work by the contractors before being managed in-house. The large pile of soil that many of you will have seen in the nursery was estimated to be around 4200 tonnes of which we estimate we have a surplus of 1000 tonnes which can be used for other projects going forward. All of this material used has been either donated to us by 2 house extensions in North Berwick, spoil from the 17<sup>th</sup> bunker and the foundations of the Bulk Materials Building along with the existing nursery being excavated to a depth of 300mm. This has been a great sustainability project as we have not had to bring any new material in and with the surplus material that we can use for years in the future, we will be recycling/reusing material for most project work going forward.



*Figure 3: Turf Nursery being seeded by Greotech*

Applied Irrigation came in to install the irrigation pipework and sprinklers and trained 2 members of the team, Alex and Graeme, on how to do this. This has probably been the most satisfying part of the project, seeing 2 of the team install parts of the system so confidently with only one and a half days of training which is great experience for them going forward.



*Figure 4: Graeme undertaking training in the Mini-Digger.*



*Figure 5: Graeme and Alex learning how to fusion-weld pipes together*

Greentech will finish off the project by cultivating the site, adding a pre-seed fertiliser and sowing the seed which will be a fescue mix. Once germination starts appearing, we will manage the growth by cutting the grass to increase tillering and fertilising to thicken the sward up. Irrigation will be applied throughout the day to keep the soil wet and increase the rate of germination.

#### [Australian Superintendents Visit](#)

We are very lucky that people want to come from all over the world and experience the West Links and that is not just limited to golfers. I get many requests from greenkeepers that are coming to East Lothian and wonder if they can meet me for a course walk. Mark Parker (Superintendent at New South Wales Golf Club) and Chris Howe (Superintendent at Concord Golf Course) were in the UK for 12 days and visited golf courses from Hayling Island on the south English coast up to Brora in the Highlands. I find these visits very beneficial as not only do they learn about our site, but I also learn about their challenges and experiences too. I spent an enjoyable few hours with Mark and Chris and I am delighted we could accommodate them. Last year we welcomed the Superintendents from Royal Melbourne, Kingston Heath, Victoria, Royal Adelaide and The Australian clubs who absolutely loved being out on the links.



*Figure 6: Mark (left) and Chris (right) from Australia on the 12<sup>th</sup> green.*

#### Hot Topic – Winter Course Enhancement Projects

The Winter Course Enhancements Projects document will have landed in your inbox in the last few weeks and hopefully, this goes to show that we are doing our due diligence and planning ahead. We have set some lofty expectations this winter with 17 bunkers and 4 tees planned for reconstruction. It is important to stress that the programme of works is not exhaustive, nor is it fixed as the weather will play a factor at times in what we can get done. We plan to start the bunker rebuilding in early November and will attack the bunkers in the worst condition first, the 2 left greenside bunkers on 12, front left greenside on 6, etc. As many of the bunkers have not been rebuilt for a number of years there are a few bunkers that will require gentle landscaping around the bunker, some bunkers will be brought back out to their original size and all bunkers that will be worked on will be refilled with new bunker sand, matching the bunker sand that is in 17.



*Figure 7: Winter Course Enhancement Projects*

Chris Haspell and Clyde Johnson (industry-leading experts) will undertake the work on the tees with:

- 4/15<sup>th</sup> tees being a straightforward relevel.
- the 6<sup>th</sup> tee will be dropped in height and will be all on one level creating more space for the white tee area.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> tee will be stripped of the existing rootzone to a depth of 300mm and replenished with the surplus rootzone from the turf nursery to 250mm. The path down the middle will be removed and the walk up to and down from the tee will be landscaped and softened to make it more user-friendly.
- The 16<sup>th</sup> white and red tee will be sensitively reshaped and moved over to the left to fall in behind the existing blue tee which will be carried out at the same time as the bunker on the left-hand side of 15 is rebuilt.

The left-hand side bunker on Redan is clearly a significant and iconic feature and we feel that it is only right that we use experts to shape and restore this bunker to how it should be. As you can see in the photo below, the bunker doesn't fit properly into its surrounding and tilts from left to right pushing all balls towards the face making it hard to play out from. The bunker will increase in size but will be more representative of what was there previously.



*Figure 8: The bunker on the left side of the green looks out of place and doesn't fit the surroundings.*

There are many other projects out on the course that are planned for the years ahead and hopefully, the Members and visitors will appreciate the care and execution of the projects going forward to know that we are rebuilding key features sensitively and with the improvement and development of the West Links as our priority.

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Course Manager