



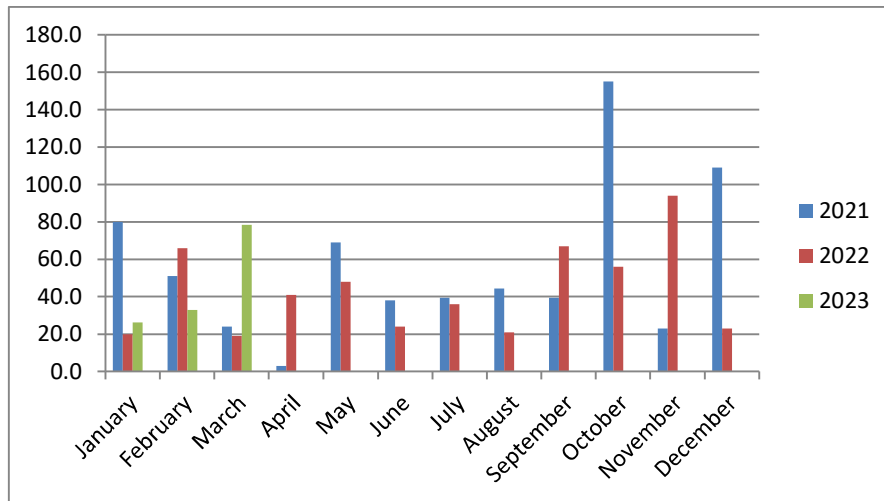
1832

**NORTH BERWICK  
WEST LINKS**

## Course Report – April

### Course Update

March was a totally mixed bag on the weather front with some days it felt like Spring was in the air, and on other days it was a cold reminder that we weren't out of winter quite yet. Looking at last years weather data, although it has felt like a really good start to the year weather wise with some really nice mild days in January and February, we are actually behind on Growing Degree Days (GDD) points – see Hot Topic at the end of this report. This means that the temperatures have been slightly cooler than last years but the main difference is that we have had a good amount of rain this year already to avoid having a prolonged dry start to the year compared to 2021 and 2022.



*Figure 1: The green bars indicate the rainfall in 2023 compared to 2021 (blue) and 2022 (red).*

It has been great to hear comments about having a good pace on the greens but I must advise caution as we wait for the “spring flush” of growth and the Poa Annua starting to produce seedheads. When we do start getting proper growth on the greens, there will obviously be a drop in speed and our cutting regime will ramp up to daily instead of cutting twice a week as we are currently. The height of cut on the mowers will drop from 6mm currently to <4mm so we will mitigate the loss of speed as best as we can, but it is inevitable that we will go through a period where the greens speed does drop. A simple analogy is to compare grass to the Forth Rail Bridge:

- When it's cold, the bridge will contract. Grass will not grow and will enter a period of dormancy.
- When it's warm, the bridge will expand. Grass will start to grow, tiller, increase vigour and seed will start to germinate.

In March, we have also been able to catch up on quite a few smaller turfing job around the course as well as continuing to burn bunker edges. We have also started installing a new path going up to the blue tees on 11 and made some adjustments to the existing stairs going up to the 11<sup>th</sup> white tees.



1832

**NORTH BERWICK  
WEST LINKS**

March Maintenance Week

The March Maintenance Week was very successful with Ken Siems coming in with his son Jacob to Dry-Ject all 18 greens on the main course as well as the Putting Green. Dry-Ject is a sand-injection machine which blasts a channel into the green using a jet of high-pressure water and fills up the channels with sand (more info can be found here - <https://kensiems.com/dryject/> ). We estimated that we injected approx. 45 Tonnes of Washed Dune sand into the greens to a depth of approx. 4 inches. This was Ken's third visit to the West Links in 3 years and he said he has noticed a big improvement in the greens since his first visit.



*Figure 2: Ken Siems with the Dry-Ject on the 1st green - not a bad spot to spend a Sunday afternoon.*



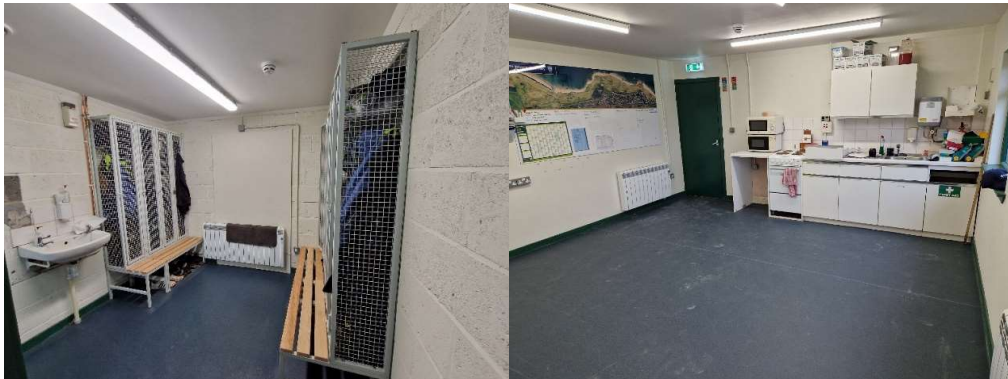
*Figure 3: An example of the sand-injected channel from the 15th green.*



Following Dry-Ject, we overseeded the greens with Fescue seed using the Blec Multi-Seeder followed by a brush and a roll. Although Sunday and Monday were mostly focused on supplying sand to the Dry-Jects, on Tuesday we managed to give the Vredo Overseeder its maiden run on the 3rd and 14th fairways. Fairways were also sprayed with Wetting Agent, iron, ammonium sulphate and seaweed. Preparations were also started for the course to reopen on Wednesday morning for the 9 Hole Medal.

### Facility Upgrades

Since the turn of the year there has been a lot going on at our maintenance facilities. The works which were detailed in the March Report are nearing completion and we are delighted with the upgrades that have been made. The team are now walking into a warm environment in the mornings with a drying room to dry their gear after wet weather. The whole facility has been given a much needed face lift which gives it a more professional feel but also now complies with Health & Safety with an upgraded fuse box, upgraded wiring around the facility, improved lighting (including emergency lighting) and a brand new fire alarm system. A huge thanks to Philip Gill (Maintenance) for organising and overseeing the works.



*Figure 4: The Locker Room (left) and Canteen (right) following upgrades.*

### Health and Safety Visit

Chris Barraclough came for a course walk on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March with Stuart Bayne, Richard Connell (Mechanic) and myself. It was great to spend time walking the course and seeing some issues that we might not notice day to day. We were also able to speak about some plans/ideas that we have going forward and how H&S might impact them such as the stairs and the path at the 11<sup>th</sup> tees. We will go through his report and continue to update our policies as the year goes on.

### Divot Squad

Alan Tweedie and Ian Peebles have re-joined the team as part of the Divot Squad for 2023. They were a huge help to us last year and allowed the full-time team to concentrate on other tasks around the course. They will be divotting tees and fairways as well cleaning course furniture and emptying bins. We will be adding a third member to the team in the next few weeks.



*Figure 5: Alan and Ian – The Divot Squad*

#### Yellow Markers

It has been noted that the yellow markers around the site are quite hard to see and people using them are sometimes unsure where they are located. We have installed these Kirby markers as a trial at the 1<sup>st</sup> tee and the 9<sup>th</sup> tee which is situated on the left hand side of the fairway. We wanted to use something that would be easier to spot without being invasive such as a post or bigger tee markers and hope that the Kirby markers will be a good solution. We will trial these for a period and welcome any feedback.



*Figure 6: New yellow markers on the 9<sup>th</sup> hole.*



### Hot Topic – Growing Degree Days

Growing Degree Days (GDD) is a data model which helps to identify the growth patterns of grass. This may sound ridiculous to some as they may think that grass just grows and then we cut it, but with a lot of tasks we do on a golf course, there is a lot more to it than just cutting grass.

GDD is calculated by the entering the lowest and highest daily temperature to find the average. With an average temperature over the base temperature of 6°C, GDD points will start to accumulate. Average temperatures the base of 6°C will result in no growth (no GDD points). By calculating how many GDD points are accumulating, it can help us to see what the expected growth of the turf is and can identify spraying opportunities to suppress *Poa Annua* seedheads emerging (occurs at roughly 150 GDD points) and also how quickly the grass is growing to identify reapplication windows (every 150 GDD points). For cool season grasses, we are looking at average temperatures >6°C for grass growth and >10°C for seed germination. The below charts shows the growth pattern for 2022 which shows that sustained growth really didn't start until May and carried on all the way through to December.

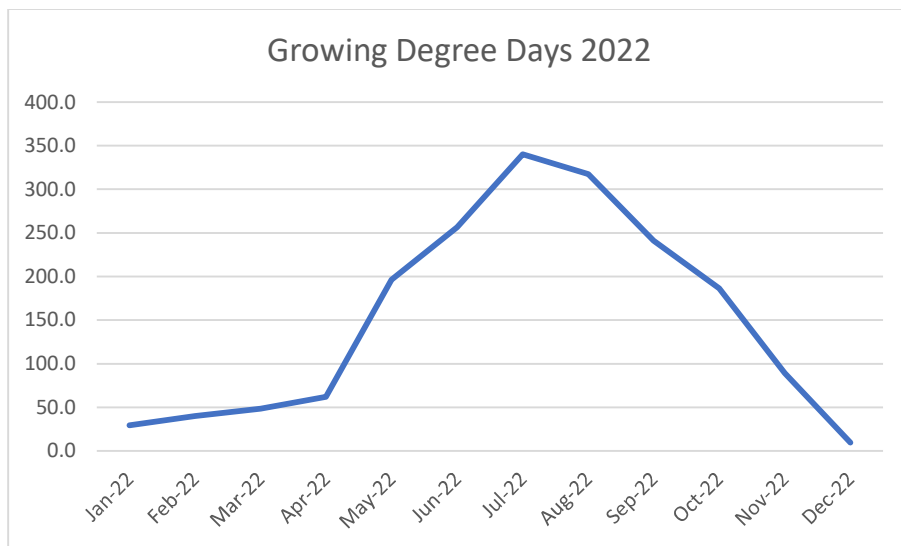


Figure 7: Chart showing the growth pattern for 2022.

Likewise with any computer driven data models, it gives you a great idea of what “should” be happening on site, but coupled with our performance data that we collect (clipping volume, moisture, green speed) we get a greater understanding of how our site is reacting to the weather, fertiliser, irrigation etc.

Kyle Cruickshank  
Course Manager