

Course Report – Autumn/Winter 2018

Introduction:

After the prolonged dry spell during the summer we are now back to the normal weather pattern which we are most familiar with.

The intensity of the dry spell posed some challenges which I believe we met. Particularly the need for hand watering which proved to be very effective in maintaining grass cover. The drought also provided us with an opportunity to review our irrigation requirements and drainage needs.

Greens:

The transition of our greens to the finer more traditional and sustainable grasses is continuing. Early in October we over seeded again with our chosen grass species. These seeds have germinated and can be seen as small circular clumps of a lighter green colour.



The programme is working well, however it does take time. We plan to expedite the transition with the more frequent use of a newly developed over seeding machine. The course agronomist Conor Nolan is happy with the progress we are making.

Tees and Approaches:

Tees:

The tees have been tined twice this autumn, over seeded and top dressed. We are using the Vreedo slit seeder on the tees using a Rye/Fescue seed mix of 60/40. The Rye component of this mix gives us a low growth habit which is hardwearing, with the Fescue providing sward density with reduced inputs.

Approaches:

Also solid tined and top dressed twice this autumn. Both the tees and approaches are treated similarly in terms of aeration and sand topdressing. This programme continues throughout the winter season. The over seeding of the approaches is carried out also using a Vreedo slit seeder. The grass species used is 100% fescue, a more sustainable grass in less high impact areas.

Both the tees and approaches are treated similarly in terms of aeration and sanding which continues throughout the winter months. On average those operations take place 4 to 5 times with circa 150 tonnes of sand applied. The best performing approaches this year were those where we installed irrigation. We plan to further increase this number.

Fairways:

Over seeding of the fairways took place with particular attention paid to areas that struggled during the summer. A topdressing of 450 tonnes of sand was applied after. Again a Rye/Fescue mix was used to over seed giving us a hardwearing and sustainable sward.

Across all areas of the course we are striving to have a greater preponderance of the above grasses growing in a well-structured medium.

In keeping with that objective the club purchased an Immants Shockwave recently. This machine creates 12" inch slits in the ground and then vibrates to create smaller fissures that break up compacted soil, thus improving soil structure and drainage characteristics. This machine will be used intensively on the wetter fairways to bring them up to standard. This programme should alleviate the need to install a more intensive drainage system that is presently in place on the 9th and 15th fairways particularly.



Conservation:

New planting of trees and shrubs will take place over the winter period, replacing those that are dead or damaged. Along with strategic planting around the course to enhance definition and increase safety.

The water quality and quantity in our lakes and rivers remained high throughout the summer. The lake at the 9th which we enlarged during the construction period is a very valuable asset. It is from this lake we extract the irrigation water for the course.

We had a very good year with our 3 bee colonies as they continue to enhance our ecological footprint.



Capital Works:

We will commence very shortly the construction of new tees at the 4th and 10th. Jeff Howes our course architect has produced very nice plans for these areas, especially the 4th tee.

We also plan to continue with the bunker enhancement programme, concentrating on those in most need of renovation.

Further irrigation installations will take place on some approaches, priority been given to those that proved the most challenging during the summer drought.

Conclusion:

We have an intensive programme of work over the coming months with the emphasis on enhancing key areas of the course, while also maintaining playability to a high standard during a challenging time of the year.

Eddie Walsh

Course Superintendent